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THE SILVER SHADOW
THE UTTERMOST STAR
WISPS OF WILDFIRE

# THE CRYSTAL POINTERS

By

F. W. BOREHAM

THE ABINGDON PRESS

NEW YORK CINCINNATI

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# CONTENTS

## PART I


| CHAPTER | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| | BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION | 7 |
| I. | THE FOOTLIGHTS | 11 |
| II. | POCKETS | 22 |
| III. | CRANKS | 33 |
| IV. | CRUSTY | 43 |
| V. | A BASKET OF BOMBSHELLS | 54 |
| VI. | A MORNING MIND | 64 |
| VII. | MAY AND DECEMBER | 74 |
| VIII. | THE WIREPULLER | 86 |


## PART II


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| I. | THE YOKE OF YOUTH | 99 |
| II. | THE STOCKMAN | 110 |
| III. | THE LADY OF THE LAKE | 121 |
| IV. | ALL FOOLS' DAY | 133 |
| V. | BUNCH | 142 |
| VI. | THE RISKY ROAD | 151 |
| VII. | THE CUCKOO IN THE ROBINS' NEST | 162 |
| VIII. | THE EMPTY CRIB | 173 |


## PART III


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| I. | WHAT'S MONEY? | 187 |
| II. | EMPTY PITCHERS | 198 |
| III. | TABLOIDS | 206 |
| IV. | OLIVER SPREADBURY | 217 |
| V. | THE POISONED SPRING | 229 |
| VI. | KISSES | 240 |
| VII. | THE NOONDAY GHOST | 250 |
| VIII. | NEW YEAR'S DAY | 260 |

# BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

CRUISING, some years ago, across the Southern Ocean, we encountered ice in latitudes in which, at that time of the year, ice is seldom seen. For some hours we were entirely surrounded by it. A few of us, gathered in the stern after dusk, were amusing ourselves by speculating, in an amateurish kind of way, as to the points of the compass and the bearings of the ship. The problem was suddenly solved. Piercing the gloom about us, two bright points of light gleamed over the virgin shoulder of one of the bergs, looking as cold and glassy as the ice itself.

'The Pointers!' exclaimed one member of the party, pointing to them; and, surely enough, in a few moments, the Southern Cross itself burst upon our view, looking, in those seas, particularly splendid.

Everybody in these Austral lands knows the Pointers. Strictly speaking, they are no part of the Southern Cross; but they point to it: and he who catches sight of them looks wistfully for the glittering Cross itself.

Somehow, this experience of years ago rushes back upon my mind as I lift my pen from these pages. The papers that I have written possess no value of importance of their own; but they point

to things that no man can afford to miss: *that* is their only glory.

FRANK W. BOREHAM.

ARMADALE, MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA.
Easter, 1925.

# PART I

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# I

## THE FOOTLIGHTS

THE best of a railway train is that you never know where it will take you. You fancy, when you purchase your ticket, that you have a fairly shrewd idea as to your destination; but, nine times out of ten, when you look back upon the journey afterwards, you find that your preliminary conjecture was absurdly inaccurate. You expected the train to convey you to another *town;* as soon as it got possession of you it whisked you into another *world.* An experience of this kind befell me only last week.

I was on my way to Adelaide. At least, that was my impression when I visited the booking-office and boarded the express. There were only two of us in the compartment. I spent the first half-hour in trying to decipher the life-story of my companion. Who is he? What is he? Where does he come from? Where is he going? It is always a fascinating—and humiliating—business. After devious intellectual processes of exclusion and deduction, you invariably reach finality at last, and, as invariably, discover five minutes later that you are about as far from the truth as you could

very well be. After carefully inspecting everything that could throw a ray of light on the mystery that I had undertaken to solve, I came to the conclusion that the gentleman in the opposite corner was either a clergyman or an undertaker. Giving him the benefit of the doubt, I was proceeding to speculate as to his ecclesiastical status and denominational connections, when my task was brought to an abrupt conclusion by the discovery that he was a well-known actor, whose grotesque appearances in light comedy kept his crowded audiences in ceaseless convulsions of laughter. Now, if there was a world of which I knew absolutely nothing at all—a *terra incognita*—a realm that I had never invaded—it was the stage. Here, to my delight, I found an opportunity of exploring it. I smiled at my short-sighted stupidity in supposing when I bought my ticket, that I was merely on my way to Adelaide.

'The thing that one has to remember,' he said, in one of the confidential outbursts with which he favored me during that long and delightful evening, 'the thing that one has to remember, and the thing that an actor is most tempted to forget, is that reality lies on the other side of the footlights.' He went on to explain that the actor, in playing his part, is hedged in by four sharply defined boundaries. *Behind* him is the scenery at the back of the stage: *on either side* are the wings: and *in front* of him is the glare of the footlights.

'I daresay,' he continued, 'that some actors and

actresses can see the public to whom they are playing; but, unfortunately, my eyes are not as strong as I could wish'—he wiped his pince-nez as he spoke—'and to me the theatre beyond the footlights is a huge black vault. The footlights dazzle me. I sometimes fancy that I am apt to ignore the thousands of eyes that are fixed so intently upon me: I am prone to forget the hearts that, out there in the void, are beating in sympathy with the part that I am endeavoring to portray. And, mark my words, as surely as an actor forgets the invisible multitude on the other side of the footlights, he will lose touch with reality. The tendency to artificiality will prove too strong for him. A subtle falsetto will creep into his voice, and a suspicion of affectation will mark all his behavior. As soon as that happens, first-class work will be impossible: he can never rise above mediocrity. But as long as he remains conscious—or even subconscious—of the real men and real women on the other side of the footlights, it will help to correct any such tendency. He will feel that he is among realities and not among shadows: he will talk as real men talk and will act as real men act. And only thus can success be achieved in our profession or in any other.'

Since returning from Adelaide, I have thought and spoken a good deal of that conversation in the train. I mentioned it at the fireside on Tuesday evening. Kenneth Salisbury was spending the evening with us.

'Why,' exclaimed Ken, 'it reminds me of a book I've been reading. I'll send it along to-morrow morning.'

He did. It is entitled *The Fourth Dimension,* and is by Horace A. Vachell. It is a story of actors and actresses: a romance of the stage. But it is written to show that the contention of my friend in the train is sound. The whole point of the book is that, to the actor, the stage appears to be a universe of *three* dimensions—the scenery behind and the wings on either side. He is apt to forget *the fourth dimension.* For *the fourth dimension,* according to Mr. Vachell, is the throbbing mass of real life on the other side of the footlights. In the development of the story, the husband's health collapses and he is compelled to leave the stage. He retires to Dartmoor and writes a powerful play. His wife continues her brilliant career. But one day she hears that his illness has taken a much more serious turn. She hastens to his side. She sees at once that the sickness must be a long one. Shall she leave him and go back to her profession? or shall she relinquish her dazzling prospects and devote herself to him? He notices that, although the days are passing, she is still nursing him.

'This means your leaving the stage,' he says.

'I have left it, Cherry,' she replies, with a smile. 'There are only *three* sides to it; and, you see, I can't do without the *fourth* side—*life!* Father was right, after all: we Yeos are not mummers. And,

in our stolid, obstinate way, we know what we want. I want *you!*'

And so, in the last analysis, she found the *fourth* dimension better than all the other *three* put together.

But the thing that struck me most, during our conversation in the train, was the fact that my companion made it clear that his remarks applied, not only to his own profession, but to *all*. 'Only as far as we keep in touch with reality,' he said, 'can any of us hope to achieve success.' Clearly, the temptation to forget *the fourth dimension* is no monopoly of the actor's. If it be true that the actor tends to become artificial, it is no less true that the minister tends to become cloistral, the poet fanciful, the philosopher hypothetical, the scientist chimerical, the schoolmaster theoretical, and the artist technical. Breaking on the shore of every life there is an undertow that threatens to sweep a man off his feet and carry him away from the practical, the actual, the real. He who can hold his own against that insidious tendency is not likely to fall far short of high success.

Did my companion know, I wonder, that he was talking to a minister? I am not sure. I only know that any man is a public benefactor who helps us ministers to keep our feet on the ground. It is so easy to lose our way among the stars. The pulpit is very much like the stage after all. We are apt to think of it as a thing of three dimensions. We forget the realities. We lose touch with real men

and real women and real life. It was said of a certain eminent divine that he was invisible all the week and incomprehensible on Sundays. The one is the inevitable result of the other. The minister who gets out of touch with men will soon forget how to speak their language. He will speak a language of his own, and nobody else will understand it. Too often we ministers call our people indifferent, and all the time they think, with perfect justice, that the boot is on the other foot. It is *we* who are indifferent. We pursue the even tenor of our dreamy way—dogmatic, idealistic, evangelistic—and we appear to them to be like summer sailors gliding over shimmering seas, whilst they are fighting their fearful way through black tempests and cruel storms. There is no place in all the wide, wide world like the pulpit. But the pulpit is no place for any of us unless we are prepared to fathom, and appreciate, and grapple with, the pathos and the tragedy of those real problems and difficulties and riddles that are harassing the minds of so many of our hearers. When men are in the throes and agonies of the terrible temptations which start out of their domestic, social, and commercial relationships, it is not enough to answer this plea for help with the cheap platitudes of theological technique. Our Master took upon Himself real flesh and real blood that He might appeal convincingly to real men and real women. Of all men, a minister can least afford to lose touch with *the fourth dimension.* Let him—

a creature of flesh and blood—cultivate the friendship of flesh and blood! Let him get to know men: let him take pains to understand women: let him laugh with the young people and romp with the children! Let him beware of taking his theology too strong! He must dilute it liberally with plenty of histories, plenty of biographies, plenty of novels—anything that will keep him in touch with the throbbing, pulsing mass of life on the other side of the footlights.

Personally, I have a great deal of sympathy with my friend in the train. Every Sunday evening I address a congregation that I can only dimly see. The moment I rise to address them, all the lights in the church go out, except the fierce lights over the pulpit. Their brightness blinds me to everything beyond them. I look, as the actor does, into a huge black vault; but I know that the vault is teeming with life. I can see a few rows of faces just around me; and they remind me of the hundreds of faces that I cannot see. And this always seems to me to be an allegory. For has not every preacher an invisible congregation? Dr. J. D. Jones, of Bournemouth, has a fine sermon based on the story of the prisoners at Philippi listening in their separate cells to the songs and prayers of Paul and Silas. 'At every service,' Dr. Jones declares, 'there is a dim, unseen, listening throng,' and he proceeds to particularize and enumerate these invisible worshippers.

(1) There is *the multitude of the redeemed.*

'When,' the doctor says, 'some tiny church in an obscure village meets to pray, all the hosts of ransomed people meet with it. The whole redeemed Church of Christ is here every time we meet.'

(2) There are *the crowds outside.* Dr. Jones maintains that they are not really outside. 'These people,' he says, 'are not unreached. I see multitudes on the fringe of this congregation hearing with you and through you. How they watch for the effect of this service upon you!'

(3) There are *the generations yet unborn.* 'Posterity,' he says, 'is simply the invisible congregation, sitting a little farther down the aisle.'

(4) And there is *the Lord Himself.* 'No congregation is small that has *Him* in the midst of it.'

Dr. Jones did not, under this last head, cite that exquisite gem of spiritual autobiography which Dr. A. J. Gordon has given us under the title *How Christ came to Church.* But he must have thought of it. After Dr. Gordon dreamed, that memorable Saturday night, that he saw Jesus enter the building and sit silently in the congregation, the church was never the same again. When I peer into the darkness beyond the pulpit lights, I like to think that *He* is there. It is a great inspiration—and a great restraint.

The railway compartment to which I have referred was occupied by an actor and a minister. That chance circumstance has led me to apply all my remarks to actors and ministers. But let nobody

conclude, on that account, that such observations are only applicable to the pulpit and the stage. As my friend the comedian so forcibly declared, the necessity for recognizing the invisible spectators affects us all. Each of us is the cynosure of more eyes than he suspects. Paul knew that. He told his converts that they were like letters—open letters—read and known of all men. The passage always reminds me of a famous story in the *Life of Francis d' Assisi*. 'Brother,' Francis said one day to one of the young monks at the Portiuncula, 'let us go down to the town and preach!' The novice, delighted at being signalled out to be the companion of Francis, obeyed with alacrity. They passed through the principal streets; turned down many of the by-ways and alleys; made their way out to some of the suburbs; and at length returned, by a circuitous route, to the monastery gate. As they approached it, the younger man reminded Francis of his original intention.

'You have forgotten, Father,' he said, 'that we went down to the town *to preach!*'

'My son,' Francis replied, 'we *have* preached. We were preaching while we were walking. We have been seen by many; our behavior has been closely watched; it was thus that we preached our morning sermon. It is of no use, my son, to walk anywhere to preach unless we preach everywhere as we walk!'

That, I imagine, is what Paul means when he refers to his converts as letters—open letters—

letters that everybody can read. If their perusal awakens in the reader pleasant thoughts, the credit will be given, not so much to them as to Him whose name they bear. And if, on the other hand, the reading of those living epistles conveys an unfortunate impression, it is not the letters, but the writer of the letters, who will be censured, criticized, and blamed.

I have not seen my friend, the actor, since: never, indeed, expect to see him again in this world. But I like to think that on ships and trams, he is chatting with other travellers, reminding them of the realities on the other side of the footlights. I remember passing a theatre one night just as the people were streaming out. I stood and watched them: I could not help it. I could see at a glance what was happening in every case. These people were coming back to life. One girl's eyes were red with weeping; but, in the lamplight of the busy street, she smiled to think that she had been crying over shadows. She had come back to reality once more. We all need the actor's sage philosophy. Like him, we all get dazzled by the glare. Beyond the footlights everything seems dark, and we forget the teeming life that the darkness conceals. We are all tempted to imagine that the things on which all the lights are streaming are the *substances*, and that the invisible things are merely *shadows*. The actor knows better. The actor thinks of *the fourth dimension*. He is conscious of the unseen throng. Like

Paul, *he looks, not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.* The queen of the stage is a queen for an hour: but the living creatures on the other side of the footlights will live and move and have their being when her ephemeral queenliness is all forgotten.

I am glad, very glad, that I met the actor in the train. He has something to teach me. He has recalled me from the artificialities to the realities of life. His eyes seem to me to be like those of which Edwin Arnold sings:

> Eyes deep and wistful, as of those who drink
> Waters of hidden wisdom, night and day,
> And live twain lives, conforming as they may,
> In diligence and due observances,
> To ways of men; yet not at one with these,
> But ever straining past the things that seem
> To that which is—the Truth behind the Dream!

That is very expressive—'eyes *straining past the Things that Seem to That which Is—the Truth behind the Dream!*' The actor who can teach me to fix my attention upon such things may spend *his* life among shadows; but he has brought *mine* into touch with the most radiant realities in this world or in any other.

## II

## POCKETS

MAN is incorrigibly addicted to pockets. It is more than a mania; it is an instinct. Pockets are second nature to him. He is essentially a beast of burden; and, unlike all other creatures of that kind, he is a beast of burden, not from compulsion, but from choice. He is a born carrier, and any contrivance that will harness him to his load is entirely to his liking. In centuries to come, fashions may change as they will; but man and his pockets will never be parted. Now this is particularly notable, for, around this question of pockets, the fiercest fight of the ages has raged. Thoughtless people, judging things superficially, hastily assume that life's most desperate struggle is the struggle between those who have *empty* pockets and those who have *full* ones. They are mistaken. The longest and most determined conflict that the world has ever known is the conflict between those who have pockets and those who have none. That deadly combat has been in progress since the world began, and it still rages furiously. So far, the result is by no means decisive. On some fronts the pockets have been completely victorious; on others they have been utterly van-

quished. In the case of man himself, the victory lies with the pockets. Civilization, with its myriad pockets, has almost exterminated the barbarism that boasted no pockets at all. We must not, however, lay too much stress on this isolated triumph. In the fields and the forests the same grim struggle has been waged, and, with scarcely an exception, the pockets have been put to confusion.

In the land in which it is my good fortune to live, nearly all the animals are provided with pockets. Our native rats and native mice, our native wolves and native bears, our native cats and native squirrels, our wallabies and our kangaroos, our wombats and our bandicoots, our ant-eaters and our opossums, are, together with a number of other varieties, all of them marsupials. They make up a remarkable collection, and are one of the wonders of the world. Differing radically in many respects, they nevertheless agree in this one. Some of them prowl, some of them jump, some of them climb, some of them dive and some of them fly. Some are savage as tigers and some are as harmless as kittens. Some sleep in the daytime; some sleep in the night. Some are vegetarians; some are insectivorous; some are carnivorous. Some are terrestrial; some are arboreal; some are aquatic. But, dissimilar as they may be in these respects, they all have pouches. That is the peculiarity that interests me at this moment. For better or for worse, Nature has furnished our Australian fauna with pockets.

But pockets generate pride. It is a great day in a boy's life when, for the first time, he wears a suit that is fitted out with pockets. It is to him what the day of its entering the water is to a duckling. He feels that he has come to his own. He cannot leave those pockets alone, cannot keep his hands out of them. He spends half his time committing his treasures to those capacious pockets of his, and rummaging among the miscellaneous contents of those pockets to get his treasures out again. When, in some golden moment, he chances to meet a boy who has not yet attained to the mature dignity of pockets, he takes an unholy delight in parading his splendor; and, in the persons of those two boys, the old feud of Pockets and No-Pockets assumes a new form. A boy is as proud of his pockets as he will ever be of their wealthiest contents. Now, lest the furry creatures of our Australian bush should—like this small boy of ours—be exalted above measure at finding themselves possessed of pockets, the scientists have told them bluntly that their peculiarity is nothing to brag about. Their pockets are the badge of their inferiority.

There was a time, so these scholars say, when practically all the animals had pockets. The whole world was overrun by marsupials. All went well until the placentals—the beasts without pockets—began to multiply and assert themselves. Then came the struggle between Pockets and No-Pockets; and

No-Pockets won. 'On perusing the stony annals of the world's history,' says Richard Semon, the naturalist, 'we see that the higher the organization of placentals becomes, and the more they spread and gain in numbers, the more do their forefathers, the primitively and less perfectly constructed marsupials, begin to diminish, getting rarer and rarer until they finally die out completely.' Something of the same kind has happened in Australia. Years ago, long before white men settled on this continent, the blacks brought dogs here. The dogs ran wild and became dingoes of to-day. The dingoes —beasts without pockets—felt it incumbent upon them to renew the ancient feud, and they swiftly exterminated some of the marsupials that they found here. Wherever the dingo goes, his carnivorous native rivals tend to extinction. In the fierce fight for food, the fittest alone survive: the feebler forms go to the wall. Hence it comes about that on the adjacent island of Tasmania, where the dingo never obtained a footing, creatures like the Tasmanian devil and the Tasmanian tiger persist, although, on the mainland, they have long since disappeared. But I need say no more. It is clear that, on every continent, and in every age, a grim and relentless warfare has been raging between the creatures that have pockets and the creatures that have none. And, among the animals, the creatures with no pockets have won.

A fearful and wonderful thing is a pocket! I

have seen the mother of eight boys settling down, on a Saturday night, to her formidable task of mending and patching. As she takes up each garment in turn, she carefully empties the pockets. And what a revelation it is! She pretends to be horrified: she is secretly proud. She likes to admire the ingenuity with which her boys contrive to pack their pockets with all the paraphernalia of boyish experience and adventure. And when, in process of time, these boys of hers hatch out into full-grown men, that cunning will by no means forsake them. The contents of a man's pockets are as curious as the contents of a museum. When a man, in changing his clothes, transfers his goods and chattels from one set of pockets to another, he should have a good look at the odds and ends that he habitually carries. What would a South Sea Islander make of this heterogeneous assortment? Here, to begin with, is his purse—a pocket within a pocket! How would he explain to the South Sea Islander the mystery of money? How would he make it clear to the brawny savage that the small white money is of more value than the big brown money, and that the soiled and crumpled paper-money is the most precious of all? Then, again, here is his watch! How, I wonder, will he make the barbarian understand our system of numerals, our divisions of time into hours and minutes; and, when he has succeeded in this, how will he initiate him into the mechanical subtleties

by means of which the watch knows the time—and tells it? Out from the opposite pocket comes a pencil! The hocus-pocus of the medicine man is simplicity itself compared with this! How can this little stick talk? It is bewildering in the extreme. Viewed as a jingling ornament, suitable for hanging on a woman's ear, the white man's bunch of keys will be the first object to awaken the black man's enthusiasm; but, when the real uses of the shining trinkets are elaborated, the unhappy islander will again plunge into an ocean of bewilderment. Not until the powers of the pocket-knife are exhibited will the native be sure of the sanity of the paleface. A knife was the first thing that the first man needed. His first toy, his first tool, his first weapon, was the branch of a tree. But how was he to sever the bough from the trunk? It was a laborious business. A knife would have made all the difference! The average man carries centuries of inventive ingenuity in his pockets without knowing it. The contents of his pockets represent the condensed essence of civilization.

They may easily represent more. They may represent the condensed essence of eternity. I have myself carried six complete Bibles in one waistcoat pocket! They were thumb-nail editions of course; the paper was extremely thin and the type extremely small: but there it was! I held the entire sacred library, six times over, in my smallest pocket! 'English Christians,' says Archbishop Alexander, 'are

agreed about this: they place the Bible in the soldier's knapsack, in the sailor's chest, in the emigrant's trunk, among the presents of the bride and in the coffin of the dead.' That is true; but the wonder is that such receptacles are large enough to contain it. I reflect that certain Oriental religions need a caravan of camels for the conveyance of their sacred books! And here we have ours, six times over, in a pocket! We recall the classical tribute which, in his *Short History of the English People,* Green pays to the transformation effected by the coming of the Bible. 'No greater moral change ever passed over a nation,' he says. 'England became the people of a book, and that book the Bible. As a mere literary monument, the English version of the Bible remains the noblest example of the English tongue, while its perpetual use made it, from the instant of its appearance, the standard of our language. Its literary effect was, however, less than its social; and, by far the greatest of all, was its effect on the character of the people at large. One dominant influence told on human action. The whole temper of the nation felt the change. A new conception of life, a new moral and religious impulse, spread through every class.' And the book that can achieve such miracles of historic achievement is so compact that my pocket can easily contain it! What is the condensed essence of civilization compared with this?

I recall to-day one of the earliest incidents of

which my memory has preserved a record. It must belong to that remote antiquity that preceded even my schooldays. We had about the place a man named Bridger. He attended to the garden and did all sorts of odd jobs. He and I were great chums. Having no brother or sister older than myself, I spent a good deal of my time in his company. As soon as my father set out for his office, I set out to 'help Bridger.' In the course of the day I discussed with Bridger all questions in the earth and out of it. I am afraid that Bridger traded a little on my childish credulity. I can remember lying awake at night puzzling over the wonders of which he told me. The tragedy that so indelibly impressed my memory occurred one summer's evening. Before leaving at tea-time, Bridger had received at my father's hands his week's wages. A couple of hours later he was back again. He had lost all the money on the way home! The explanation was simple. He had a hole in his pocket! The loss was eventually made good; but not at the time. At the time he was simply advised as to the best steps to be taken with a view to the recovery of the lost money. He thanked my father, and started a second time for home. I followed him to the gate. In contrast with his usual behavior, he had no word for me. As he turned to shut the gate, I saw him wipe the tears from his face with his sleeve. Bridger was crying, and all through a hole in his pocket!

I have often thought of it since. As the years

have come and gone they have taught me that Bridger is the type of us all. At least, he is the type of us all—with one exception. I understand that, over at the Other End of Nowhere, there is a jolly old soul who is moved, not to tears but to laughter, by the hole in his pocket. He is, I suppose, a child of Nature and takes after his mother, for one of our philosophers says of Nature herself that 'she always has her pockets full of seeds and has holes in all her pockets.' If this old gentleman hears some spicy morsel of scandal, he makes a note of it, and slips the note in his pocket—the pocket with the hole in it! They say that he is very clever at pocketing insults and affronts: he pockets them, but they do not seem to add to his load. The secret is that he puts them all in the pocket that has the hole in it. The pleasant things go in the opposite pocket, and he examines it every morning to make sure that there is no hole there. And every night, when he retires to rest, he empties the pocket that is so full and chuckles over all the treasure that he finds there; and he puts his hand into the pocket that has the hole in it and laughs at finding it always empty! Nobody seems to know which of his two wonderful pockets affords him the greater glee.

Unhappily, however, this old gentleman must be regarded as an exception. Very few of us get as much fun as he does out of the holes in our pockets. Most of us are like Bridger. The hole provokes,

not gladness, but grief. One of the old Hebrew prophets says as much. He laments that men should labor so hard and derive so little satisfaction from their toil. *'He that earneth wages,'* he cries, *'earneth wages to put it into a pocket with holes!'* When Bridger reached home the second time, his wife set to work and mended the pocket. Bridger was very fortunate, and so was his wife. The hole of which the prophet is thinking is beyond the power of needle and thread. The hole in Bridger's pocket partook of the nature of an accident: in many men it partakes of the nature of a disease. They earn wages and spend it in drink! They earn wages and lose it in gambling! They earn wages and squander it in extravagant tastes and inordinate pleasure! *'He that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a pocket with holes.'* Bridger's perforated pocket moved him to tears and me to pity; but, looking back upon it, I feel like congratulating him. There are kindred disasters over which the angels weep.

I have just been reading Dr. Alexander Whyte's twentieth lecture on *Thomas Shepard, the Founder of Harvard.* The lecture is based on Shepard's confession that *'his mind is a bucket without a bottom.'* As I read the lecture it occurred to me that a bucket without a bottom is the exact counterpart of a pocket like Bridger's. Dr. Whyte says that Shepard's bucket without a bottom reminds him of our Lord's own hearers. 'They came,' he says,

'and they sat till He was done with His sermon, and they came back again next Sabbath and sat till He was done, and then they rose up and went away as they came. Till at last, absolutely wearied and worn out with such hearers, He put them into those terrible parables that are preserved to us in the thirteenth of Matthew. In which parables He told them that, all the time He was preaching, He saw the wicked one stealing up to the seat where they were sitting and catching away the good seed as fast as He could sow it. As Thomas Shepard has it, the Devil himself came and knocked the bottom out of those hearers' minds. And still, Sabbath after Sabbath, they brought their bottomless buckets to our Lord's well, till the good angels wept over them, and till the angels of the Wicked One laughed at them, and the whole of the bottomless pit resounded with their laughter every Sabbath day, just as it resounds still.' *These* are the people whose buckets had no bottoms! *These* are the people whose pockets were riddled with holes. They were ever learning, yet never coming to a knowledge of the truth. They were for ever receiving yet never possessing. And, as we enter the presence of these unfortunates, it is time for us to give up searching our *pockets* and to begin searching our *hearts*.

## III

## CRANKS

It was most embarrassing! I hardly knew which way to look! They seemed to have completely forgotten that I was sitting there listening to every word!

John Broadbanks, Clive Hislop and I had driven over from Mosgiel immediately after breakfast for a day's shooting at Peppertree Glen. In addition to his rifle, Hislop had brought his rod, and, soon after our arrival, moved off towards the creek. During the morning, John and I awoke all the echoes of that sylvan solitude by the constant roar and reverberation of our guns; and we hoped that Hislop was finding things no less lively among the trout. At noon we met by appointment in a graceful natural arbor, formed by the interlacing of the branches of a dozen trees. The heap of furry trophies, all limp, blood-stained and reproachful, lying in the shadow of the ti-tree, and the glitter of scales in Hislop's basket, showed that our return to our respective manses would be without discomfiture. Perhaps it was the excitement of the morning's sport that led to their singular forgetfulness.

'I was talking to Harold Ashley yesterday,' said John, as soon as our al-fresco banquet had become a thing of history, 'and he was saying—'

'What on earth does it matter what he was saying?' Hislop impatiently demanded. 'Ashley is a crank; a notorious crank; as big a crank as you'll meet in a day's march!'

And then, with a tactlessness that must seem incredible, they proceeded to talk about *cranks!* First the one and then the other, they rattled away till they were tired. Cranks old and cranks young; cranks rich and cranks poor; cranks scholarly and cranks illiterate; cranks religious and cranks secular; cranks male and cranks female: the theme seemed inexhaustible. Each of them appeared to have had a remarkably wide and versatile experience. And all the time, as I have said, they seemed to be blissfully oblivious of my presence. It was extremely awkward.

The only practical thought suggested to my mind by this painful experience was that, since there are so many of us, it might be well to band ourselves together in some way for our mutual protection. I had thought of writing to the papers—after the approved fashion of cranks—suggesting the formation of such a union or guild; and was only deterred by one paralyzing reflection. If my modest epistle led to the establishment of such an organization as I proposed, I could scarcely decline the presidency or secretaryship of the league that I had myself

called into being; and I felt that there might be disadvantages in being generally and publicly recognized as the President of the Society of Cranks. I am not ashamed of being a crank, not at all; but there is no need to so emphasize that aspect of my composition as to make it appear that I am a crank—*and nothing else.* It is not fair to say of any man that he is a certain something—*and nothing else.* The Prime Minister is the Prime Minister—*and something else.* The Archbishop of Canterbury is the Archbishop of Canterbury—*and something else.* The public hangman is the public hangman—*and something else.* The rag-and-bone man is the rag-and-bone man—*and something else.* There is always a *something else.* Indeed, the *something else* is infinitely bigger than the thing itself. The Premiership represents such an insignificant fraction of the total personality of the Prime Minister that, when he is golfing among the Surrey hills or romping with his children at home, he entirely forgets that he happens to be the holder of that onerous and dignified office. When the Archbishop of Canterbury is fishing in some woodland stream in Berkshire, he is completely lost to Lambeth Palace and all its ecclesiastical cares. If you saw the public hangman among his roses, you would never suspect that he had ever seen a gallows. And when the rag-and-bone man is at the top of his form, and is running up a much-needed century for the suburban cricket team, you would never connect

that dapper form in flannels with the malodorous store in which so much of his time is spent. So true is it that in each case there is a *something else.* And so there is in mine. I am a crank, of course; it would be both foolish and futile to deny it. But, like every other crank, I am a crank—*and something else.* If I write to the papers urging the immediate formation of a Society of Cranks, and, as a result, become president of the new society, I shall thrust one section of my personality into such disproportionate prominence that the part will inevitably be mistaken for the whole. When the Prime Minister is laying his policy before the country, he looks like a *Prime Minister-and-nothing-else.* When the Archbishop of Canterbury is addressing his clergy, he looks like an *Archbishop-and-nothing-else.* When the public hangman is preparing to send a fellow mortal to his dreadful doom, he looks like a *public-hangman-and-nothing-else.* When the rag-and-bone man is busily sorting out his heaps of refuse, he looks like a *rag-and-bone-man-and-nothing-else.* It is all an optical illusion, as we have seen. It is part of life's legerdemain! And in their cases, it does not matter much. But in my case it would matter a great deal. If I become President of the Society of Cranks, people will see me out of perspective. I shall look like a *Crank-and-Nothing-Else,* whereas, as a matter of fact, I protest that I am a *Crank-and-Something-Else;* and between a *Crank-and-Nothing-Else* and a *Crank-*

*and-Something-Else* there is all the difference in the world. Yes, all the difference in the world, and a great deal more! For I am convinced that, within the compass of the solar system, there is no such thing as a *Crank-and-Nothing-Else*. The creature is as imaginary, as fictitious, and as apocryphal as the bunyip, the phœnix, or the unicorn. 'I don't believe there's no such a person as Mrs. Harris!' exclaimed Betsy Prig on a certain memorable and historic occasion. And, modelling my scepticism on hers, I solemnly affirm, and with as good reason, that I don't believe that there is such a thing as a crank who is all a crank; a crank who is a crank from the centre to the circumference; a crank who is a crank from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot; in a word, a crank who is a *Crank-and-Nothing-Else*. Why, then, should I, by some precipitate action or hasty epistle of my own, lead my fellow-men to suppose that I, in my own proper person, represent that non-existent monstrosity?

On mature reflection, I can see that it would never do to form a Society of Cranks. It is too general; it would embrace too wide a constituency: you might as well form a Society of Men and be done with it. For we are all cranks. Each of us, that is to say, is a *Crank-and-Something-Else*. Some of us contrive to conceal our crankiness more skilfully than others; that is the only difference. And in some cases, we deserve no credit for that: the merit is not strictly our own. Wordsworth had

a way of talking loudly to himself as he walked along. In moments of passion he spoke loudly and employed lively and dramatic gestures. If you had surprised him in the midst of one of these noisy soliloquies, you would have recognized him at once as a crank. But then, you could not surprise him. Wordsworth's little terrier saw to that. The dog was very jealous for his master's reputation. As long as they had the road to themselves, the poet could raise his voice and wave his arms to his heart's content. In those fine frenzies, he looked for all the world like a *Crank-and-Nothing-Else*. But no human eyes ever beheld that spectacle. For, the moment the dog heard footsteps down the lane or across the field, he stopped, faced his master, and saw to it that the poet was presentable. At the slightest sound, Wordsworth says, the terrier

> Would turn
> To give me timely notice, and straightway,
> Grateful for that admonishment, I hushed
> My voice, composed my gait, and, with the air
> And mien of one whose thoughts are free, advanced
> To give and take a greeting that might save
> My name from piteous rumors, such as wait
> On men suspected to be crazed in brain.

How much we cranks all owe to those gentle monitors—sometimes canine, but more often feminine—who cunningly veil our oddities and make us appear to the world as though we are not cranks at all!

When, in my easy-going way, I affirm that we are all cranks, I do not mean that we are all equally

cranky. I suppose that I myself am an average crank: I flatter myself that I am no worse than that. In many of my fellows the crank element is less pronounced than it is in me: in many it is more. And it is because of my own sufferings at the hands of those who are more cranky than I am, that I am about to appeal for mercy to those who, in this respect, have the advantage of me. There are three kinds of cranks—cranks-positive, cranks-comparative and cranks-superlative. A crank of any kind is very exasperating, especially to a crank. A crank who is cranky on the theory that the earth is flat is a desolation of abomination to the crank who is cranky on the theory that crocodile-oil is the only effective cure for muscular rheumatism. And vice versa. Neither will listen to the other for five consecutive minutes. But this intolerance will not do. I plead for pity. The cranks-positive must be very patient with the cranks-comparative, just as the cranks-comparative—among whom I count myself—must show infinite courtesy and consideration towards the cranks-superlative. All through my life I have been pampered and petted. I have, therefore, no reason to complain. The world has been to my virtues very kind and to my vices very blind. When the crank-element in me has become conspicuous, my friends have been wonderfully forbearing. But, if trouble should arise, I am ready for it. If, one of these days, my crankiness should prove too much for the

patience of one of my companions, and he should turn upon me, I have resolved upon my method of defence. He will next morning receive a parcel at the hands of the postman. It will contain a book. It will not be a Bible, but a dictionary, and a Saxon dictionary at that. An old Quaker gentleman at Hobart, when he was dying, placed a Saxon dictionary in my hands and begged me to accept it as a memento of my visits to him. I bore it home wondering to what use I could possibly put it. But I am ashamed of myself for having harbored such a thought. Only this morning I looked up the word *'cranc'*—the Saxon word that has led to the coinage of our own. And I find that it means *'weak, near to death.'* We do not treat with anger those who are weak or near to death. If I post my dictionary to the man who treats my foibles with asperity, it will surely lead him to repentance!

*'Near to death!'* I did not expect the dictionary to give the matter a tragic turn. And yet the tragic turn is a true turn. I remember, many years ago, being maddened by the vexatious behavior of a crank-superlative. The things he said of me, and the letters he wrote to me, were more than I, a crank-comparative, could bear. At length he broke all bounds and angered me beyond endurance. I wrote a letter that, I thought, would bring him to his senses. It was a stinging letter; it was meant to hurt. I put on my hat and went out to post it. Somehow, the stillness of that starry night, satu-

rating my spirit, softened me, and the letter felt hot in my hands. I reached the pillar-box; but I did not commit the fiery letter to its care. It was a lovely night; I was enjoying the walk; I strolled straight on. I could easily post the letter, if I so desired, on my way back. A quarter of a mile further on, I met a friend. He had been back at his shop, stocktaking, and was returning home, tired. I turned to walk with him. Half-way back to the pillar-box he startled me.

'So poor old Crittingden is dead!' he observed. Crittingden was the name on the envelope in my hand!

'Is he, indeed?' I exclaimed in astonishment, 'when did this happen?'

'Oh, he died suddenly early this afternoon. It's a happy release, you know; he's had a bad time. You know his secret, I suppose?' I confessed my ignorance.

'Oh, I thought everybody knew,' my companion went on. 'Crittingden only had two children, a son and a daughter. The son was killed soon after his wife died, and the daughter, poor girl, lost her reason, and is in the Cranbrook Asylum. Poor old Crittingden never got over it. It soured him, and he's better away!'

*'Weak,'* says the dictionary, *'and near to death'!* I returned to my fireside that night, humbled and ashamed. I tore the letter into small fragments and burned them one by one. And, as I kneeled

before the blaze, I prayed that I, a crank-comparative, might, in the days to come, find grace to treat the cranks-superlative as I should wish the cranks-positive to treat poor me.

# IV

# CRUSTY

## I

When I saw Crusty for the first time, I thought him the most picturesque figure it had ever been my lot to meet. It was a delightful afternoon in early summer. The mistress of the manse and I had been driving for nearly an hour along a road that differed in no essential respect from the paddocks on either side of it. The grass over which we were driving was just as green, and the tussocks as numerous, as on the other side of the barbed-wire fences. We had to crawl along at a snail's pace in order to give Jeanie a chance of keeping her feet out of the rabbits' holes. Faint wheel-marks on the grass were the only indication that others, similarly situated, had passed this way before us. Travelling under such conditions, every fur-long seeming a mile, we felt that we were going a long way without getting anywhere. The country ahead of us appeared one vast solitude.

'Are you sure that we are on the right road?' my companion enquired.

As a matter of fact I enjoyed no such confidence. On the day of their wedding Ned and Maggie

Sutherland, in begging us to visit them, had carefully described to me the exact spot in which their new nest had been built. I conceived but a hazy idea as to its whereabouts. As soon as we lost sight of Mosgiel, crossed the ridge, left the main road, and plunged into the unmade track that winds among the foothills at the back of Saddle Hill, I became painfully uncertain. Presently, however, we came upon a belt of bush, and heard, to our infinite relief, the thwack, thwack, thwack of an axe.

Five minutes later, an extraordinary apparition confronted us. A gigantic figure, at least six feet six in height and broad in proportion, stood facing us in the centre of the track. His face was bronzed; he wore a long, black beard; his immense and well-formed limbs gave an irresistible impression of titanic strength. His head was bare; his blue jumper, thrown open, exposed his massive and sinewy chest; his hammer, knives, and foot-rule were stuck into his belt. The moment he caught sight of us he turned quickly to his work. As we drove up, he was placing an iron jack under a log that was as thick as he was tall. It seemed incredible that one man should be able to handle, lift, and split such monstrous masses of timber. In the years that followed I often stood and watched him: he seemed to handle the biggest trees in the bush as easily as an ordinary man handles small logs in a wood-shed.

'Excuse me,' I called, 'but could you tell me the

way to Ned Sutherland's place?' The air was perfumed with the odor of the newly cut wood: the track on which we had reined up was carpeted with bark and chips: Crusty proceeded to adjust his jack as composedly as if there were nobody within miles of him. I waited until, the instrument being in position, he rose: I then repeated my question.

'We are looking,' I explained, in a slightly louder voice, 'for Ned Sutherland's place. Do you happen to know if we are on the right road?' Still no answer: Crusty went on with his work without even deigning to glance at us. My companion hazarded the conjecture that he might be deaf. But a deaf man is quick to *see* things. A deaf man would have stepped forward as soon as we drew rein; and, seeing my lips move, would have told us of his infirmity, putting his hand to his ear the while. Moreover, since the safety of an axeman's life and limbs must often depend on his hearing every creak and groan that the timber gives, it was difficult to imagine that a deaf man would expose himself to such risks. I repeated my question a third time, with no better result: Crusty never even lifted his eyes from his work. I therefore flicked the reins on Jeanie's back and we proceeded.

Half an hour later we were enjoying afternoon tea with Maggie and Ned. To our surprise we found that they were expecting us.

'Through the trees,' Maggie explained, 'we can

just see the crest of the hill, and we happened to catch sight of the buggy before you went into the hollow. We said you'd be here in an hour or so.'

We told them of our adventure in the bush and of the fruitlessness of our enquiries.

'Oh, that was old Crusty,' cried Ned, laughing boisterously. 'We had lots of fun with him until we got to understand. The trouble was,' he added, turning directly to me, 'that you were not alone. The first time I met him was when I was building the shanty here.' He looked proudly round his trim little home as he said it. 'I was coming whistling along the track one day, when, all of a sudden, I met Crusty. He was pushing a wheelbarrow containing his tools and paraphernalia. I spoke to him and he stopped. We had quite a long chat. He told me of the contract he had accepted for splitting so many tons of posts and rails; and he pointed out to me the trees from which he intended to get them. I remember how babyish I felt as I looked up to him, whilst he talked down to me. What a tremendous fellow he is!'

Maggie handed her husband a second cup of tea, as an encouragement to him to go on with his story. He did.

'The second time I came upon him,' he said, 'was about a month after the wedding, and Maggie was with me. He was sawing away at a huge log, and I took Maggie across to him. I thought that *she* would be interested and that *he* might like to

explain everything to her. But, my word, we got a cold reception! He never even looked at us. I spoke, but I might as well have addressed the log he was sawing. We came away in disgust. Crusty won't speak to a woman, nor to a man if he has a woman with him. Maggie's little niece was here the other week, spending a day or two with us. She had a camera with her, and took it into her head that she would like to take Crusty's photograph. He ignored her as she approached, and then, perceiving her intention, he tramped off into the bush and concealed himself until she was gone. He'll have nothing to do with girls or women at any price: he evidently thinks they're a bad lot. Perhaps,' he added, with a mischievous glance at Maggie, 'perhaps he knows them better than we do.' Maggie boxed his ears and passed him the cake.

'Where does he live?' I enquired.

'Oh, he lives—if you can call it living—in a little humpy away down the gully,' replied Ned. 'It's a tumble-down old place—a single room without even a window: I suppose he gets as much light as he wants through the cracks and the open door. He goes up to Rowan's store at Saddle Hill once a week for candles, tinned meats, and general supplies. As soon as they see him coming they have to scurry Mrs. Rowan and the girls out of the way double-quick. If he catches sight of any of the women-folk behind the counter, or if there are women in the shop, he strides out on the instant

and marches on to Sandy Laughlin's store at Mosgiel. Sandy is a bachelor, and Crusty knows that he will have no trouble there.'

As the clock struck five, Ned and I strolled off to get the buggy ready for the return journey, and we were soon on the crest of the hill looking down upon Mosgiel. In the years that followed I had many long talks with Crusty. Everything that I wanted to know about woodcraft and bushmanship he willingly told me; but as soon as I got to closer grips, probed beneath the surface of things, and touched the secret springs of his own life, he shut up like an oyster and was as silent as the sphinx.

II

Two things precipitated the change that overtook Crusty. The first was an arrival: the second was an accident. When the New Zealand Government undertook the formidable task of constructing a railway line through the rugged and mountainous region known as the Otago Central, Mosgiel became for a time the headquarters of the gangs of men engaged upon the work. Scores of new faces were seen about the township. Among these was a man named Dick Fleming, a wild, reckless fellow, who drank much and talked more. He was comparatively new to the country, having come from the exhausted diggings of New South Wales. He was never tired of telling more or less authentic stories of his adventurous career on the goldfields. One

summer evening he was standing with a group of kindred spirits, just outside the door of O'Kane's Hotel, when he suddenly caught sight of Crusty's immense form passing John Havelock's store immediately opposite. On seeing him, Dick became immoderately excited.

'Hey, Andy!' he yelled, at the top of his voice.

Crusty paused involuntarily, looked across, glowered fiercely at Dick, and then strode on.

'Why, that's old Andy Donovan!' Dick went on, addressing his boon companions. 'Nobody could mistake him: he was the biggest chap on the diggings, and the best. When the gold petered out, he went down Madderfield way and took up with the prettiest girl in the district. To hear him talk of her you'd have thought that the sun rose when Mary opened her eyes in the morning, and set when she closed them at night. But she jilted him: vanished the night before the wedding: and about a month afterwards he saw, in the *Sydney Morning Herald,* the account of her wedding to a young farmer at Myrtle Vale. My word, didn't Andy cut up rough? He swore he'd never speak to a woman as long as he lived, and, up to the time I saw him last, he never did.'

This street-corner revelation soon became public property. Mosgiel had always been curious about the taciturn giant up in the woods. The new development reached my ears through our butcher-boy, who knew my interest in Crusty. I sought

an early interview with Dick Fleming, and extracted from him the fullest particulars that he was able to impart. On many points he was a trifle hazy, but, fortunately for my purpose, he was sure of Mary's name, and could recall within a month or so the date of the wedding that never took place.

Armed with this information, I sent a note to Ned, asking him to call at the manse when next he visited the township. On Friday morning I heard his 'coo-ee' at the gate. He couldn't leave the cart, he said, because he had the two youngsters with him: he was to pick up Maggie at the station.

'By scissors,' he exclaimed, as soon as I gave him the news, 'we'll get to the bottom of this! There's an explanation somewhere: a woman like that wouldn't leave old Crusty in the lurch and marry another fellow just for fun. Either she wasn't the woman he took her to be, or there's a mistake somewhere. We'll find out. Maggie has a brother in a bank in Sydney: we'll ask him to do a little ferreting; it ought not to be very hard work.'

Maggie agreed, and the letter was written that very night. Then the unexpected happened.

## III

Ten days later Ned was again at the manse.

'You'll never guess what's happened,' he said. 'Poor old Crusty broke his leg up in the bush! In getting out of the way of a falling tree, he

stumbled over a stone and a thick branch struck him. There was nowhere else to take him, so they brought him to our place. It's mighty awkward, for he won't let Maggie go near him. He'd tear off the splints if he knew that, whilst he was lying unconscious, Maggie practised first-aid on him. The doctor has been twice since; but I have to take him his meals and do everything for him. It's a terrible tie.'

I promised to visit the invalid, and, two days later, did so. I tried hard to get him to talk about New South Wales, but with small success. He merely admitted having lived there.

'Ah, well,' I said, in taking leave of him, 'I'll come again in a week or two; and, if I can pick up a few Sydney papers, I'll bring them: they'll remind you of old times.'

By the time that I paid that next visit, Crusty was able to hobble about on an enormous pair of crutches. By that time, too, a letter and a bundle of newspapers had arrived from Sydney. Ned brought these down to the manse almost as soon as he had read them. He was very excited about it. We talked the matter over and it was agreed that I should take them up to Crusty next day.

We were sitting in the sun, just outside the door of Ned's cottage. Crusty's broken leg reposed upon a chair placed in front of him, and his crutches lay on the ground near by.

'Well, Crusty,' I said, 'I promised to bring you

some New South Wales papers, and here they are! You'll find all sorts of things in them. I was reading last night in this one—the *Western Advertiser*—of the discovery, in an old quarry at Madderfield, of the remains of a girl who had been missing for years. It seems that she disappeared mysteriously on the night before her wedding-day. It's supposed that she went out late that night to post a letter, took a short cut back past the top of the quarry, missed her footing, and fell in.'

Crusty was trembling in every nerve. He leaned forward eagerly and asked the girl's name.

'Her name,' I replied, 'was Mary Chambers.'

Crusty moaned. 'No,' he said at length, 'it can't be! Mary Chambers was married at Myrtle Vale a month afterwards.'

'I think not, Crusty,' I replied. 'There's a bit about that further down.' I turned the paper and read it to him. *'Several of the residents at Madderfield,'* it says, *were under the impression that Mary Chambers went to Myrtle Vale and was married in that district some weeks afterwards. We learn on enquiry, however, that the Mary Chambers who was married at Myrtle Vale was in no way connected with the Mary Chambers whose tragic death it is to-day our painful duty to record.'* I rose, laid the paper on my chair, and quietly left him. It was no time for talk.

A few days later, Maggie took him his afternoon tea, and he raised no protest. His terrible reserve

slowly melted. Within a few months he was at the manse, and once or twice, on special occasions, he even dropped into a back seat at the church.

'It's a sore, sore thing,' he said to me one day; 'it's a sore, sore thing to misunderstand and misjudge. It isn't the one that's misjudged that suffers, it's the one that holds in his heart a hard and bitter thought. It makes *him* hard and bitter. You all call me Crusty, and I richly deserve it. I shall always be Crusty here, but, please God, I won't be Crusty for ever and ever.'

And, as we watched him soften and sweeten with the passing of years, we could quite easily believe it.

# V

## A BASKET OF BOMBSHELLS

### I

A WINDOW, a basket, and a rope! But for that window and that basket and that rope we should never have heard of Paul, and the whole course of world-history would have been incalculably poorer. The tremendous record of continental conquest unfolded in the Acts of the Apostles would never have been written. The basket that contained that young convert—his great life yet unlived, his historic proclamations unuttered, his epistles unwritten, his triumphs unachieved—was a basket of bombshells. The chapter that records Paul's conversion records also the hairbreadth escape that immediately followed. On the road to Damascus there fell upon him the light that never was on sea or shore: in the city of Damascus he was threatened with a violent death. 'The Jews took counsel to kill him, and watched the gates night and day.' And he himself tells us that the Governor and officials were parties to the murderous project; but, he says, '*through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall and escaped their hands.*' A window, a basket, and a rope; those three things

are the symbols of life's most striking and most memorable deliverances.

Life tends to contract. Before we realize that we are prisoners, we find ourselves confined to a single room. A man goes into business: it quickly absorbs all his energies: it shuts him in, incarcerates and immures him: he has no thought for anything beyond it. An engrossing pastime or a fascinating sport may do the same thing. Every chamber has six sides. The ceiling shuts out the heavens; the floor shuts out the earth; the walls shut out the four points of the compass. The stars that shine in God's great sky: the flowers that bloom on His fair earth: the beauty spread about us on every hand: all these are easily excluded. We are like silkworms: we have a way of imprisoning ourselves in our own cocoons.

The man in the street imagines that religion is a contrivance for narrowing life. He is wrong. Religion is a contrivance for broadening life. It enables a man to burst the links of habit, to break from straitened ways, to walk with buoyant stride a wider world. It provides him with a window, a basket, and a rope. And, by means of these, he escapes.

II

*The window is well worth looking at.* There is always a window. However cribbed and cramped life may have become, there is somewhere a lattice

or a casement or a grating from which an ampler landscape may be seen. The prisoner of Chillon, shut up in his wretched cell, found a means of relief in varying the directions in which, like a caged tiger, he paced it.

> And it was liberty to stride
> Along my cell from side to side,
> And up and down, and then athwart,
> And tread it over every part;
> And around the pillars one by one,
> Returning where my walk begun.

But the thrilling sensation of his imprisonment came when, making footholes in the wall, he clambered up to the barred grating, and, peeping through, caught a glimpse of the mountains.

> I saw them—and they were the same,
> They were not changed like me in frame;
> I saw their thousand years of snow
> On high—their wide long lake below,
> And the blue Rhone in fullest flow;
> I heard the torrents leap and gush
> O'er channell'd rock and broken bush.

The window made all the difference. And the beauty of it is that there is always a window somewhere.

Sometimes it takes the form of a book. What a day that was on which George Borrow opened the famous packet that contained a copy of *Robinson Crusoe!* He devotes a whole page of *Lavengro* to the story of his excitement: 'The ice which had hitherto bound the mind of the child with its benumb-

ing power was thawed, and a world of sensations and ideas awakened to which it had hitherto been an entire stranger.' To the end of his days Borrow could never think of that moment without a delicious thrill. Life was never the same again. It changed everything, and, but for it, his own works could never have been written. What a night that was on which a small boy named Walter Scott found, among the unalluring professional tomes in his father's library, a copy of Shakespeare! He has told us how, night after night, he crept out of bed, bore the volume in feverish excitement to the flickering firelight, and, as long as he could persuade a single spark to illumine the entrancing pages, read on and on and on. It was through that window that Sir Walter Scott caught the vision that led to the creation of all the droll and lovable and romantic characters that figure in the Waverley Novels. And what a day that was on which a boy named Charles Dickens, at the dullest, drabbest, dreariest period of his youthful career, found a row of old novels on a high and dusty shelf! Forster has told the story in his *Life of Dickens,* and Dickens himself has told it in *David Copperfield.* Those twelve old books, Forster says, furnished the boy with a host of friends when he had no single friend; and when he was compelled to leave them, he felt that he was leaving everything that had given his ailing little life its picturesqueness and sunshine. 'It was,' his biographer adds, 'the birth of his fancy.' 'Those

books,' says Dickens, in *David Copperfield*, 'those books were my only and my constant comfort. They were glorious companions; they kept alive my fancy; they gave me hope of something beyond that place any time.' In each case, it will be observed, the books served as windows. A very small window may open upon a very extensive landscape. By means of those windows, the imprisoned minds of Borrow, Scott, and Dickens contrived a dramatic and eventful escape. They became citizens of infinity.

Sometimes it takes the form of a hobby or a holiday. Mark Rutherford found that a vision of the sea or the stars turned his thoughts towards immensity, and gave him deliverance from the pettiness about him.

The window, as every architect knows, takes many forms; but the point is that it is always there. Paul himself says so. Having passed through his thrilling and adventurous experience at Damascus, he unhesitatingly assures all imprisoned spirits that, if they look about them, they will certainly find a window somewhere. *'God is faithful,'* he says; *'He will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will, with the temptation, provide a way of escape.'*

A way of escape! Temptation, however strong, never amounts to compulsion. A man is never shut up to an evil course. There is always an alternative. There is invariably a way out. It is not

always easy, especially if the night is dark, to find the window. But, beyond the shadow of a doubt, it is there. *'Through a window,'* Paul says, *'I escaped.'* It is the general experience. The line of vision is the line of liberty. The window represents the *avenue* of escape.

III

*The basket is well worth looking at.* And, for the man who has set his heart upon being at liberty, there is always a basket. The basket represents those things that, falling short of the ideal, may nevertheless serve a most useful purpose. The basket was not made to carry a man; it was made for a man to carry. But the man whose life depends upon his finding some vehicle to which he can commit himself, will not quarrel with the basket on that account.

Appetite is the best sauce. A hungry man will not criticize his food. A drowning man will clutch at a straw. The man who recognizes the extremity of his peril will not be fastidious about the basket. The Church is a means of grace just as the basket is a means of escape. The ideal Church has never yet been discovered. It is the easiest thing in the world to find fault with the Churches. *This* one is too high and *that* one too low. The music of *this* one is too jaunty and the music of *that* one too elaborate. *These* services are too ornate and *those* are too severely plain. *This* preaching is too

academic and *that* is too illiterate. It is all true—perfectly true. The Church has no right to resent faithful and honest criticism. She must ceaselessly struggle towards the ideal. But it is also true that the man whose very life depends upon instant action will not stickle for perfection or stipulate for the ideal. No man would travel in a basket for preference. It is neither comfortable nor dignified. Yet circumstances alter cases. When a man has to escape for his life by a window, he will not cavil at the basket. The soul that is in deadly earnest to flee from the wrath to come will find in any Church or in any ministry some word of hope to which it can desperately cling.

There is always a basket: that is the point. And the presence of the basket is intensely significant. I was talking last night to Harry Peel. Harry has long been on the verge of Christian discipleship. But he can never persuade himself that his faith is of the right kind; what assurance has he of his acceptance with God? Note the assumption. He assumes that God sits critically, judicially examining and testing the faith of every penitent. If it comes up to the requisite standard, the applicant is accepted: if not, he is summarily rejected. Harry forgets about the story of the Prodigal Son. The father did not wait to watch the manner of his boy's approach: he ran to meet him. That is the significance of the basket. The basket proves conclusively that He who provides the means of

escape is anxious that the escape should be made. Why is the cup placed at the spring unless he who places it there is eager that every thirsty traveller should drink? Why should the whole world be dotted with churches—each church a "means of grace"—unless the great Lord of all the Churches is eager that, of His grace, all men should taste?

In the early chapters of the Bible there is a charming and suggestive incident. When Joseph's brethren returned from Egypt, and told Jacob that Joseph was yet alive, and that he was ruler over all the land of Egypt, the old man could not give credence to the amazingly improbable story. He shook his head sadly, and refused to believe it. *'But when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, his spirit revived, and he said, Joseph is indeed alive: I will go and see him before I die.'*

When he saw the wagons!

When he saw the basket!

When he saw the churches!

It is very difficult to explain the means of escape except on the hypothesis that *'God desireth not the death of a sinner but rather that he may turn from his wickedness and live.'* The basket, like the window, is well worth looking at. And so is the coil of rope.

IV

*The rope is well worth looking at.* A rope has two ends. Paul, in the basket, hangs at one end:

who is at the other? I see the basket, with its priceless load, being lowered from the window. It is not being lowered by machinery. Back there, out of sight, there are human hands upon that rope! I wonder whose hands they are!

At the back of every great and noble deed there are invisible hands; the hands that hold the rope; the hands without which the splendid action could never have been performed. We are too fond of crying, proudly, 'Alone I did it!' It is always untrue. Robinson Crusoe seems to be alone on his island; but what of the men who made his tools, the men who invented them, and the people who taught him how to use them? The explorer seems to be alone as he tramps across the continent. But what of the man who made his gun, the thinker who invented his instruments, and a score of others without whose aid his heroic achievement would have been impossible?

I have often stood beside that plain brown slab in Westminster Abbey—the stone that marks the resting-place of David Livingstone. The opening words of the inscription always impressed me as being very beautiful: *'Brought by faithful hands over land and sea. . . .'* Faithful hands!

The faithful but unseen hands upon the rope! If a man escapes, he escapes because of the fidelity and affection of a loyal band of rope-holders! A mother, a father, a teacher, a writer, a minister: there are quite a number of them. One pair of

hands is never strong enough to lower the basket from the window. At the back of every conversion there is a sacred conspiracy, a holy alliance, an inspired league. Every man who reviews the story of his own escape will sing a doxology for the window; he will sing a doxology for the basket; and he will sing a fervent doxology for the hands upon the rope.

V

For every man there is a window: for every man there is a basket: for every man there is a rope—and 'faithful hands' to hold it. A man should have a good look at that window, that basket, that coil of rope, and those faithful hands. And, having had a good look at them, he should ask himself one of the most pertinent questions that the New Testament propounds to him: *'How shall I escape?'* Let him say to himself, *'How shall I escape if I neglect so great salvation?'* And if he finds that question as unanswerable as everybody else has found it, let him make the unanswerable question answerable by lopping off its first word. And the terrible answer that will then leap out at him will hurry him to the Cross.

## VI

## A MORNING MIND

MAN is a mighty maker. Morning, noon and night, he is always at it. Just think of the things he makes! Sometimes he makes haste; sometimes he makes love; sometimes he makes mistakes; sometimes he makes decisions; but, whatever he makes, he is always making something. Just now I am thinking about the decisions. Their manufacture represents the most delicate of all his tasks. Upon his cleverness or clumsiness in this department, the success or failure of his whole career must ultimately depend. The making of a decision needs a cool head, a steady nerve, and a firm hand. A good deal depends upon the moment at which he makes it. There are times when a man should make up his mind to make up his mind; and there are times when a man should make up his mind to do nothing of the sort. The making of a decision is like the taking of a photograph; it needs a good light—a light that is neither too fierce nor too feeble. The man who understands precisely *when* to take a photograph is the man who understands precisely *how* to take a photograph. And, in the same way, the man who understands precisely *when* to make up his mind

is the man who understands precisely *how* to make up his mind. With all the conditions favorable, and the camera most skilfully manipulated, the photograph may be ruined through the exposure having been made when the light was either too dazzling or too dim. The picturesque background may have been most tastefully chosen and most artistically prepared, the sitters may have been most excellently and symmetrically grouped; the postures may be perfect, the dresses a dream, and the smiles all that the most fastidious operator could desire. The plate may have been most wisely chosen; the lenses most scientifically adjusted; and, at the critical juncture, there may not have been the trembling of a leaf, the flutter of a a veil or the flicker of an eyelid anywhere. And yet, if the exposure was made at a moment when the light was too glaring or too glum, the picture will prove a general disappointment. I have known a man to blur the whole landscape of his life in the same way. Circumstances arose which demanded a decision. All the facts were before him and his task appeared by no means difficult. But, like the photographer who removes the shutter when the light is unfavorable, he faced the crisis at the wrong moment and everything was blurred in consequence.

The best decisions are made, as the best photographs are taken, by daylight. A flashlight photograph is all very well in its way; but its way is not the best way. Flashlight decisions belong to

pretty much the same order of things. It sometimes happens that a matter has to be decided in the evening, just as it sometimes happens that a photograph has to be taken after sunset. In each case the operator will do the best that is possible to him in the circumstances; but he will do it regretfully. He will sigh for the beauty of the morning; and will wish that the photograph could have been taken, or the decision made, in the freshness of the sunlight. I shall be told, I daresay, that some of the most momentous decisions ever reached were made after nightfall. I can only reply that such an objection, if raised, will prove my critic to be a very superficial observer. For see!

We all get more or less drunk after dark. I do not mean that we indulge to excess in spirituous liquors; *that,* after all, is merely one species of intoxication. One of these days a temperance orator, eager for fresh ammunition, will see the force of this new argument and will use it with deadly effect. Why go to the public-houses, he will ask, and spend your hard-earned money in intoxicating liquors, when everybody else contrives to get intoxicated for nothing? It will be a bold statement, but it will be a true one. What happens is this: A man consists of two distinct, and often conflicting, sets of qualities—his judgment and his emotions. We commonly classify them, in our free and easy way, as his head and his heart. If, in some moment of

psychological inebriety, a man stultifies his judgment at the dictates of his emotions, we say that his heart ran away with his head. Shakespeare defines a drunkard as a man who puts an enemy into his mouth to steal away his brains. The analogy is arresting. In the one form of intoxication the heart runs off with the head; in the other, the thief goes off with the brains: it comes to much the same thing.

Now the trouble is that, from daylight till dark, we work our heads to death and keep our hearts locked up. We overwork our judgments and rigidly suppress our emotions. We rush through life with a serious face, and, if some softer sentiment appeals to us, we wave it aside with the reminder that business is business. But all things come to an end, and the daylight dies at last. We put up the shutters and go home. Then comes the changing of the guard. We hand ourselves over from the domination of one set of faculties to the command of another set. The head has had its innings; it is the heart's turn now! The judgment, worn out, sinks quietly to rest; the emotions wake up! They are fresh and keen and vigorous, like a dog unchained at last. Under their guidance, anything may happen. The man is intoxicated. He is not himself. Or, if he *is* himself, then he was not himself during the daytime. For *this* man is not *that* man. Robert Louis Stevenson has told the amazing story of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde; and the story, incredible as it seems, is reflected in the experience of each of

us every day. We pass from Philip drunk to Philip sober every morning; and from Philip sober to Philip drunk again every night. It often happens that Philip drunk is a much more amiable person than Philip sober. Therein lies half the tragedy. And it is *that* half of the tragedy that has misled the critic who taunts me with the fact that some very admirable and very notable decisions have been reached after dark.

A drunken man may, of course, reach a very wise decision. Indeed, only the other night I heard a poor fellow go reeling past the house proclaiming at the top of his voice that he would never get drunk any more. It was a most excellent resolve. But who, noticing that a drunken man occasionally reaches a wise decision, would argue that, on that account, any man faced by a critical issue should, in order discreetly to resolve the matter, go and get drunk? A drunken man sometimes resolves, under the influence of his stimulants, that he will never get drunk any more; but, much more frequently, he resolves to go home and beat his wife or smash the furniture. Therein lies the other half of the tragedy, and *this* half my critic forgets. For if it be true, on the one hand, that some of the *best* decisions are registered after dark, it is no less true, on the other hand, that the *worst* ones invariably are.

In one of his essays, Charles Wagner points out that the ancient Scythians had a singular way of

making important decisions. They discussed the matter twice. They first considered it when under the influence of wine, which stirs generous sentiments, loosens the tongue, and gives courage to the fearful. But the decisions then reached, impregnated, as they were, with the fancies of drunkenness, were not regarded as final. They were reviewed after a prolonged fast, and no resolution was carried into effect until it had survived the ordeal of this double test. I repeat, then, that we all get more or less drunk after dark. Our nocturnal intoxication may arise from spirituous liquors or it may arise from the wild surge of our released emotions after the severe repression of the day. We may be swept off our feet by an exciting book, by the convivial glow generated in agreeable society, by a picture, by a song, by a quarrel. Any one of a score of passions, finding the judgment asleep, may get to itself the upper hand. Under its domination we become something other than ourselves; and the great issues of life ought not to be decided under such conditions. Resolves then made should, if possible, be rigorously reviewed.

In his *Born in Exile,* George Gissing keeps the reader on tenter-hooks, through more than five hundred pages, waiting for the momentous decision which his heroine, Sidwell Warricombe, makes on almost the last page of the book. But Godwin Peak writes at last making the proposal for which we have waited so long. Next morning Sidwell takes her

friend Sylvia Moorhouse to a retreat at the top of the house. Here the two girls sit in the light and warmth, a glass door wide open to the west, the rays of a brilliant sun softened by curtains which flutter lightly in the breeze from the sea. Sidwell tells Sylvia of Godwin's letter.

'In the night,' she says, 'I wrote to father, but I shall not give him the letter. Before it was finished, I knew that I must write *this*. There's no more to be said, dear.'

'Ah, well,' replies Sylvia, 'there's much to be said for a purpose formed on such a morning as this: one can't help distrusting the midnight.'

Precisely! The midnight is unworthy of confidence. Now and again, as my imaginary critic points out, a really noble decision is reached in the evening. I have even heard of people being converted after dark. It occurs much less frequently than one would suppose. Although most of the evangelistic propaganda of the Church is carried on by artificial light, the majority of conversions take place in the daytime. I made a list this morning of a score of historic conversions; and, so far as I could find, only three of the twenty took place at night. Moreover, there is this to be considered: The *good* decisions reached after sunset are, as a rule, the fruition of thoughts, aspirations, and convictions that have been cherished companions of sunlit hours; whilst, generally speaking, the *bad* decisions reached after sunset are registered in a

gust of passion, of anger or of excitement, and in defiance of the sober judgment of the daylight. The happy man is the man who reduces to a minimum the contrast between Philip drunk and Philip sober, the distinction between Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. He will give his emotions such play in the daytime that they will not be unduly elated at their complete emancipation at night; and he will keep his judgment so alert in the evening that the chances of serious intoxication will be small. That happy man will be too astute to make any decisions after sunset. Like Sylvia Moorhouse, he will distrust the midnight. When a resolution must needs be taken after the shadows have fallen, he will take it so guardedly and cautiously that it will bring in its train no aftermath of regret. Every morning he will approve in the sunshine the decisions that he reached in the lamplight; and every evening, as he reviews the day from his observatory by the fireside, his heart will find no reason to be ashamed of his head.

An excellent example of a good decision being reached after dark occurs in *With Christ at Sea*—the autobiography of Frank T. Bullen. He tells us how, when the ship was lying at Port Chalmers, he and a number of the other sailors went ashore one night after supper and heard the sound of singing proceeding from an old sail-loft. Moved by curiosity they mounted the stairs and sat down. The leader announced 'Jesus, Lover of my soul.' 'The singers burst into the opening bars of "Hollingside"

and I was reduced to blind dumbness. The pent-up feelings of years broke loose, scalding tears ran down, and something stuck in my throat like a ball. I had not heard the hymn since the happy days in the old chapel.' Something in the nature of an address followed. 'I do not know how long it lasted; I only knew that something was being offered to me that I felt I must have. At the close, the speaker invited all who were moved to seek the Lord to stay behind for further consideration of the matter. Had my chum, whose existence I had forgotten, risen and said "Come along," I fear I should have gone. But to my unspeakable relief, instead of doing so, he leaned towards me whispering "I should like to stop, old man!" "So should I!" I replied, eagerly, and that night the great decision was made.'

But let me ask two questions. That night the great decision was made; but was *that* the beginning of it? I turn back a few pages and I find the young sailor in Sydney Harbor. 'Often,' he says, 'I would stand on deck when my ship was anchored in Sydney Harbor on Sunday morning and listen to the church bells playing "Sicilian Mariners" with a dull ache at my heart, a deep longing for something, I knew not what. The decision that night at Port Chalmers was only the fruition of those morning yearnings, after all!'

And my *second* question. The decision was reached in the lamplight; but how did it look in the

sunshine? 'The next day,' Frank Bullen says, a little further on, 'the next day was Sunday, and, rising at four in the morning, I dressed and went ashore, climbing up to the top of Flagstaff Hill. And there, alone in the sweet freshness of the morning, I remained for two hours, saturated with an unspeakable joy. The beauty of land and sea and sky as the rising of the sun touched it with celestial gold, the waking of the birds, and, above all, the intimate certain sense of the presence of God, settled down upon my soul and filled me with such happiness as I think must be a foretaste of Heaven. I had just discovered in this God a loving, tender Father! Inexplicable, indefinite, but a recompense for any amount of hardship, was this new life communicated by the touch of Jesus.'

'One cannot help distrusting the midnight!' says Sylvia Moorhouse, and I agree with her. But when midnight decisions are *preceded* by such sunlit aspirations and *followed* by such pure morning joy as this, they leave the realm of suspicion and evoke the felicitations of men and angels.

## VII

## MAY AND DECEMBER

May and December! December and May! Here in Australia they arrive together. In the actual December we get the traditional May. To those of us whose childhood was spent in the Old Land, the merry month of May stands immemorially associated with thoughts of the swallows skimming gracefully over the millpond, of nightingales singing blithely down in the copse, of finches chattering excitedly in the hazels, of buttercups spreading their cloth of gold over wayside meadows, of winding lanes loaded with the delicious perfume of the hawthorn, and of the gorse breaking into a blaze of glory on every heath, common, and moor. But in Australia these Maytime splendors—or their antipodean equivalents—make their appearance towards the end of the year. We get the body of December with the soul of May. The year dies singing. It is a kind of parable, a reflection of one of life's most charming phases. December and May often delight in each other's society. The very young and the very old—those whose springtime is just dawning and those whose autumn leaves have fallen—frequently find mutual enrichment in association with each

other. A Mosgiel memory rushes back upon me as I write.

When I first settled in that little New Zealand township, May was quite a girl. She had, I think, just left school. I remember meeting her one evening soon after my settlement. Until that evening I had only seen her sitting with her parents in the church. I was crossing the fields to visit a sick man at an outlying farm. As far as I could see, I was monarch of all I surveyed; there was not a soul in sight. But, as I approached the slip-panel that guarded a gap in the gorse hedge, I heard, not far away, the clear, sweet trill of a happy girlish voice. The hedge temporarily concealed us from each other, and I could tell, by the glad abandon of her song, that she, too, fancied that she had the fields all to herself. As I neared the panel I caught sight of her. She wore a white frock; she carried her hat in her hand, swinging it rhythmically to the lilt of her song; and the wind was playing with the wealth of auburn hair that streamed like a cataract of gold over her shoulders. I lifted the panel to let her through; she saw me, and her song died on the instant. She blushed, and made as though to restore her hat to its natural place, but I out-manœuvred her by extending my hand.

'Well, May,' I exclaimed, 'I little dreamed of meeting you out in the fields this evening!'

'Oh!' she replied, with a laugh, 'you'll often catch me here if you come about this time. I slip across

whenever I can to see old Mrs. December. She lives in the little cottage among the blue-gums yonder. It would be a great treat for her if you could look in on her some time.'

I promised that I would, and we parted. I frequently called on Mrs. December after that. Mrs. December was not, of course, her real name; but what has that to do with it? It fits her ever so much better than her real name, and everybody who loves the old lady would wish her to have the things that suit her best. Often, when I called at the cottage, May was there. Sometimes she was curled up on the hearth-rug with her head resting on the old lady's lap; sometimes she was sitting in front of the fire, with her feet on the fender, reading aloud from a magazine or a favorite book; sometimes she was setting the tea things, dusting the shelves, or attending to little matters of the house. Mrs. December was a quiet little body with jet-black hair, a kindly contented face, and hands that seemed dreadfully worn and wrinkled. Her wedding ring greatly interested me; it looked like a slender thread twined round her thin, thin finger, the years had stolen so much of the gold. She wore, summer and winter, a quaint old-fashioned cap, and a little grey shawl crossed over her breast. She possessed quite a collection of spectacles—one pair to wear when she was eating, one to wear when she was reading, one to wear when she went out, and so on. She was always getting them mixed up, and putting

the wrong glasses in the wrong cases. May seemed to spend half her time sorting them out for her, and, to make sure that she was doing the work correctly, she used to test them by putting them on. I can hear the old lady's laughter now as she watched with amusement the gay young face in glasses. If she laughed too much, her cap got all awry, and then May laughed at her, called her a 'giddy old thing,' and told her she ought to be thoroughly ashamed of herself. And then they would both laugh together. They seemed to thoroughly understand each other, these two.

In those days, the days that immediately followed my settlement, Mrs. December sometimes came to church. If Sunday morning broke in blue skies and genial sunshine, May would scamper off after breakfast, arrange with one of the farmers to call with his gig at Mrs. December's cottage, and then hurry on ahead to get the old lady ready for her outing. Mrs. December was a queenly little soul, and liked every ribbon to be in its place on these great occasions. Before setting out, May would walk round her, inspect her from every point of view; and go into raptures of admiration after each scrutiny. Mrs. December scolded—and smiled.

This was in my early days. Two or three years later a change came. May found other fish to fry. Hector, a farmer's son, who had often driven Mrs. December and May to church on those lovely summer mornings, won May's heart, and I married them.

Her love-making by no means interfered with her friendship for Mrs. December. I think that, in those days, she was at the cottage even more than usual, and I suspect that she had a few secrets that the old lady did not share. Mrs. December was at the wedding: it was the last time she ever came out. She lived for several years after that, but she was too frail to climb the gig or to cross the fields. Upon poor May troubles came thick and fast. Exactly a year after the wedding I buried her baby boy; then Hector met with a painful accident that made him an invalid for one year and a cripple for another; and, a little later, May herself broke down. Through those trying years it was a very well-worn track that led from the new home to the old cottage.

'I must go and have a talk with Mrs. December!' May used to say, when life pressed upon her hardly; and, as on the occasion on which I met her first, she always came back singing. When I saw, in the earlier days, how much Mrs. December owed to May, and when I saw, in the later days, how much May owed to Mrs. December, I used to wonder which of the twain gained the most from the friendship of the other.

'I really don't know what I should do without May,' exclaimed Mrs. December one summer evening, as we sat together in her little garden and watched May vanishing across the fields.

Years afterwards, on the evening of the day on

which we laid Mrs. December's poor little body in its grave, I called on May.

'Oh, the comfort that she was to me!' she cried, burying her face in her hands. 'I don't know how I could have lived through it all if it had not been for her!'

There it is! Love sees to it that, in every partnership which she arranges, no person gains at the expense of another. She manages things so skilfully that each of the parties to the contract is immeasurably enriched by the union.

In one of his charming essays, Charles Wagner describes an English countryside in harvest time. The day is long; the fields hum with life; everybody is toiling from dawn until dusk; the harvest calls out all the busy workers. The little village itself seems asleep; there are only two classes of people in it; there are the very old, and there are the very young. The former are too feeble to work at the stooks, and the children would only be in the way. And so, on the thresholds of the cottages, and on benches outside, sit trembling old women and palsied grandfathers, their chins supported on their canes, watching over groups of playing children. In this novel scene, with its suggestion of calm and beneficent repose—the old folks having finished life's labor and the young folks having as yet known nothing of it—Mr. Wagner sees the world in miniature. Here are December and May thrown together, not by chance, but in the essential nature of things!

The comradeship, viewed in this setting, appears to be perfectly natural and perfectly congruous. Grouped like this, December seems to belong to May, and May to December.

They gravitate towards each other. When Goldsmith's veteran of the wars

> Wept o'er his wounds, or, tales of sorrow done,
> Shouldered his crutch and show'd how fields were won,

none listened to his story with more rapt and wondering admiration than did the boys of the village. We all remember Nathaniel Hawthorne's telling delineation of the romance of Grandfather's Arm-chair. Charles Wagner applies his parable of the village in harvest-time in much the same way. He points out that old people dearly love to tell of the things that have been and are now no more. And these are the very things about which the children love to hear. Even when the eyes are heavy with sleep, the ears are insatiable and the lips cry for more. 'No stage, with all the magic of its wires and lights, is,' he says, 'equal to the arm-chair of grandfather. The little ones climb on his knees. Their eyes are fixed on his, and they prize the permission to handle the head of his cane or stroke his long white beard. Never again in our lives do we find anything so interesting. What are the romances that we read later on, all made of transparent fictions and cumbered with literature? what are the most famous plays or thrilling dramas compared with what we listened to as children, with

that freshness of impression to which everything is new and with the naive trust to which everything is true?' In the eyes of May, a halo of wonder and romance appears to encircle the furrowed brow of December, and the world has gained immeasurably as a result of that childish veneration.

But let no one suppose that the benefit is all on one side. If it is good for May to exploit the golden memories and imbibe the mellow wisdom of December, it is no less good for December to hear the pealing laughter and be infected by the fresh young gaiety of May. The rippling merriment and deathless hopefulness of youth keep men from hurrying into premature senility. Moreover, the matter has its practical implications. No man of our time has been heard by the medical fraternity with greater respect than was Sir William Osler, who, until recently, was Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford University. Upon no point did Sir William lay more stress than in his appeals to the old and young doctors to keep in touch with each other. In his famous lectures he returns to the subject again and again. In the medical profession—and in every other—the tendency is for the older men to regard the younger ones as upstarts, and for the younger men to regard their seniors as fossils. It may be true, and often is, that both old and young behave in a way that earns for them these ugly epithets. That circumstance, so far from mitigating the misfortune, only intensifies the magnitude of the

calamity. 'I wish,' Sir William exclaims fervidly, 'I wish that the older practitioners would remember how important it is to encourage and utilize the young men who settle near them.' The young doctor is fresh from the university; his brain is simmering with new ideas; he has at his command the fruits of science's very latest researches; he has listened, with wondering eyes, to the last word that wisdom has spoken. 'If,' says our brilliant Professor, 'if the old doctor has any soft arteries in his grey cortex, he will be able to pick up many valuable points from this young fellow; and, on the other hand, there is a vast amount of clinical wisdom floating about in each parish which is now wasted, and which dies with the old doctor, simply because he and the younger men have never been on friendly terms.' 'The old doctor,' Sir William says again later, 'must walk with the boys, else he is lost—irrevocably lost. I would not have him to be a basil plant, feeding on the brains of the bright young men; but if he is to keep his mind receptive, plastic, and impressionable, he must travel with the men who are doing the work of the world, the men between the ages of twenty-five and forty.' Those who have read Ralph Connor's *Doctor of Crow's Nest,* will remember that, at a critical stage in the development of the story, a situation of the kind depicted by Sir William Osler holds the reader's attention. When Barney Boyle, aspiring to the medical profession, goes to see the local practitioner,

Dr. Ferguson, about it, the experienced surgeon laughs at his presumption. But, on reflection, it occurs to him that it would do him a world of good to review all his earlier studies in this young fellow's company, and to see things from his youthful point of view; and, in the issue, both men profit by the happy comradeship. Again, in one of his famous Yale Lectures, Dr. Phillips Broks recalls the remarkable effect upon his own mind of a day or two spent in the society of a young minister whose ordination had taken place only a few months before. 'He was in the first flush and fervor of his new experience,' says the great preacher, 'and in listening to him I recalled much of the spirit with which I myself began many years ago.' Contact with this young enthusiast revived in the heart of one of the world's most eminent ministers the freshness and fervor of his earlier days. There is evidently a vast amount of wisdom underlying the arrangement by which, in the case of humans, several generations dwell upon the face of the earth contemporaneously, enjoying a possibility of cultivating each other's society to their mutual advantage.

I was chatting yesterday with Gerald Calder, the secretary of the Church at Bellhaven. The minister of that congregation recently died, and Gerald is naturally concerned about the appointment of a successor.

'I can see,' he said, 'that we shall have a good deal of difficulty. The young people have set their

hearts on having a young minister, and the older folk want one of ripe wisdom and long experience. I scarcely know what to do.'

These well-meaning people at Bellhaven are very foolish. Their arguments sound plausible, but there is nothing in them. The most beautiful relationship often exists between May and December. I think of the grizzled old men who, thirty years ago, welcomed me to Mosgiel. I was a callow youth, fresh from an English college; they were in their December days. But no tie could have been stronger than the tie that bound us together until, one by one, they dropped into their graves. And when Gerald Calder told me that the young people must have a young minister, I thought of the days of my boyhood. Our minister was a very old man of gracious demeanor, gentle voice, and sunny countenance. We boys found it wonderfully easy to believe that he was God's messenger to us. When he entered the pulpit, we listened as though it had been revealed to us that he had just come from the presence of the Unseen, and during the week we opened our hearts to him as we should have hesitated to do to a younger man.

And, besides, what does it matter? For these people at Bellhaven, in worrying about the minister's age, are leaving out of sight the essential factor in the situation. The essential factor in the situation is the fact that, whatever the age of the minister, the Saviour Whom he preaches is the delight alike

of May and of December. When we are out in middle life, pressed by many cares and subjected to many temptations, we may forget Him and let our worldly hearts grow cold. But children and old people—May and December—never fail to recognize the magic of His name. That is what Mr. G. T. Coster means when he sings that

> Aged men and blooming maidens,
> Young men, children sweet,
> Bring their crowns of adoration
> To His feet.

Let the people of Bellhaven invite a minister—whatever his years—who knows how to unfold the unsearchable riches of Christ, and they will yet see May and December coming hand in hand to dedicate themselves to His service.

## VIII

## THE WIREPULLER

*Wirepullers are mostly women and women are mostly wirepullers.* I may as well blurt it out in the opening sentence and get it off my conscience. In the interests of sober truth and simple justice, the statement had to be made: I could never have got to the end of this screed of mine without it. This being so, the sooner it is out the better. I am quite aware, of course, that my bald statement will please nobody. I might just as well have poked my stick into a hornet's nest. I am neither a prophet nor the son of one. It is not mine to cast the horoscope of the days that lie hidden in the future; yet I see distinctly what will happen. I shall stroll one evening into a room in which a few of my gentlemen friends are lounging at their ease. I shall be saluted stiffly, coldly, distantly, and greeted by each with the merest nod. The hum of conversation and the bursts of laughter that I heard as I came up the hall will give place, when I enter, to a stony silence. But the silence will not last for ever. Armstrong is the most daring spirit in this charmed circle and usually acts as spokesman for the rest.

'And so,' he will exclaim, suddenly removing his cigar and fastening upon me a look beneath which

I am expected to perceptibly shrivel, 'and so *we* are the puppets and *the women* pull the strings! A pretty compliment to pay to your sex, I must say!'

I foresee, too, that, in the course of my afternoon's visiting, I shall chance upon the 'at home' day of one of my lady friends. I shall endeavor to excuse myself, but it will not be easy.

'No, no,' the fair hostess will exclaim, 'you must come in and shake hands. Do! These ladies,' she will add, as we enter her beautiful drawing-room, 'these ladies have just been talking about something you have said about us. What was it, Mrs. Pinkerton? You must state the case on our behalf.'

'Oh, we women are all schemers, you know, dear,' Mrs. Pinkerton will reply with a haughty smile and the faintest inclination of her head towards myself, 'we are designing creatures, full of all kinds of craftiness, given to intrigue and all that kind of thing. It's very nice to be told in so many words just what *some* gentlemen think of us; very nice!'

And yet, although, like a skilful meteorologist, I am able to foresee that this terrible storm must inevitably break upon my head, the dark clouds rolling up from two directions simultaneously, I deliberately repeat the declaration that threatens to whelm me in so much trouble. I stand like Ajax defying the lightning, or like Athanasius against the world. 'I can,' as Luther exclaimed, 'do no other!' *Wirepullers,* I say, *are mostly women and women are mostly wirepullers.*

Why, I should like to know, are these gentlemen in the snuggery and these ladies in the drawing-room so ready to suppose that the statement veils a sinister significance? I aver that it is made without the slightest disparagement to either sex and without the slightest disrespect. On the contrary, I intend it to be construed as a perfectly golden compliment; and I cannot help thinking that, when she has reviewed the matter at her leisure, even Mrs. Pinkerton will credit me with a certain admirable knightliness in having uttered it. For see! There are, as the elder Mr. Weller so justly observed to his promising son, widders *and* widders. In precisely the same way, there are wirepullers *and* wirepullers. When I say that women are wirepullers, it goes without saying that I mean that they are wirepullers of the better class. Neither Mrs. Pinkerton nor the most eloquent barrister that she could employ would be able to persuade any jury that there was a true bill against me. 'Nonsense!' the foreman of that jury would exclaim, 'the world is a network of wires! What are wires for but to be pulled? And if they are to be pulled, somebody ought to pull them! And if the women pull the wires that are there to be pulled, so much the better for everybody! There is not the shadow of a case against the accused! The so-called libel is a compliment! The ladies ought to be very much obliged to him!' Precisely! And so, for the matter of that, ought the gentlemen. It may not, at first blush, seem

altogether flattering to suggest that men—even eminent men—are puppets who only perform when the strings are pulled by feminine hands concealed behind the curtains. Yet even this unattractive symbolism is worthy of a second thought. Let my censor in the snuggery consider! Let him make the case against me as black as he will! He will say that I have suggested that, when men move, it is because women pull the strings. As a matter of fact, those are not my words; but we will not quibble. Let my accuser proceed. After the fashion of this kind, he will, of course, cite an extreme case. Let him! He will point to some eminent personage—a distinguished poet, a celebrated painter or—his eye resting on the marble bust of Gladstone that adorns the corner of the snuggery—an illustrious statesman.

'They are all puppets, I suppose,' he will exclaim, with fine scorn, 'and the women pull the strings!'

It will be observed that, in point of fact, my statement was far less sweeping. But again we will let that pass. Does my indignant friend in the cosy arm-chair really fail to see all that is involved in his own statement? Even suppose, for the sake of argument, that I *did* allege that Tennyson and Millais and Gladstone were mere puppets and that softer hands pulled the strings! Is it not obvious that figures that, thus agitated and inspired, could move as these figures moved, must have been, in themselves, perfect masterpieces of mechanism? They moved in such a way that the whole world

was the better for their movements! It is no ordinary puppet that, responding to invisible agitation, can produce results like these!

Armstrong, enthroned in his arm-chair, holding his cigar between his fingers, and seeming to see faces in the curling smoke, speaks of our distinguished poets. Well, what about Wordsworth? In her charming little monograph on Wordsworth, Miss Masson has told us that we owe all that the poet achieved to the skilful wirepulling of his sister. But for Dorothy, she says, Wordsworth would have been swept away in his youth by the political tumults of his time. It was Dorothy who reminded him of his powers, recalled him to his desk, and pointed him along the road that led to destiny.

Nor does my friend's significant glance at the marble bust in the corner carry with it the conviction upon which he counts. For even Gladstone was something of a puppet. I have been reading Mrs. Drew's delightful biography of Mrs. Gladstone. It is well to have our misapprehensions, and especially our unjust misapprehensions, authoritatively corrected. The world has always credited Mrs. Gladstone with having inspired those aspirations towards retirement that overtook Mr. Gladstone as soon as he entered the seventh decade of his remarkable life. His illustrious friend, Dr. Chalmers, maintained that the allotted span of human existence —three score years and ten—should, like the week, be divided into seven parts, and that the seventh

part—the period following the sixtieth birthday—should, as far as possible, be regarded as a Sabbatic epoch of rest and quiet. Mr. Gladstone accepted this view, and, shortly after entering his sixty-first year, became eager for retirement. Everybody at the time believed that Mrs. Gladstone was prompting this new movement. Yet the volume that Mrs. Drew has given us proves, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that the very reverse was the case. When the great man threatened to quit for ever the scene of his triumphs, it was his wife who pleaded with him to continue his work. And, in order that he might attach the more weight to her arguments, she stated her case in writing. Here is the letter! In it she pooh-poohs several minor ailments which Mr. Gladstone had interpreted as premonitions of impending decay. These little aches and pains, she tells him, are just safety-valves. Some people are overtaken by giddiness of the head or palpitation of the heart, and are compelled to take serious warning. But he is affected in no such way. He has but to pause, get right, pull himself together and go on again. She tells him frankly that he is mistaken in supposing that he can relinquish his great position, and then, should a crisis arise, resume the responsibilities of leadership. How, in common decency, could he toss the reins of government into other hands, and then, when the fancy seized him, snatch them from those hands again? And could he reasonably expect, on rushing back into the fight, to wield the influ-

ence and authority that would have been his if, throughout the entire struggle, he had borne the burden and heat of the day? 'I know full well,' she said, 'that your whole soul is bent upon doing right. You would go to the death in a righteous cause. Who could hold you when the battle-cry sounded?' She implores him to confer with several friends, whose names she mentions, before taking the irrevocable step that he contemplates; and, as a result, she gave her husband back to the public life of his country. The quarter of a century that followed proved the most notable, the most eventful and the most momentous period in Mr. Gladstone's wonderful career. Looking back upon it afterwards Mr. Gladstone himself said that 'the best and happiest period of my life dates from my sixtieth birthday. Had I even died at three score years and ten,' he added, 'fully half my life-work would have remained undone.' History can furnish no more brilliant example of wise and sagacious wirepulling. Mrs. Drew places it on record with evident gratification. When Armstrong glances meaningly at the marble bust in the corner, I shall tell this story to the assembled company and I fancy that the ice will melt as I unfold it. I shall be asked to come nearer the fire and there will be other signs of contrition. And when I have to meet Mrs. Pinkerton's onslaught, I shall repeat the tale over the tea-cups, and I can imagine the flush of pleasure that will mantle the cheeks of my fair hearers in the drawing-room.

It is a chapter in our imperial history of which no man need feel ashamed and of which the womanhood of the world may very well be proud.

Yes, *wirepullers are mostly women and women are mostly wirepullers.* I have watched them at their work. And I have noticed that the success of wirepulling depends very largely on the directness of the pull on the wire. If the wire has to go round too many corners, or over too many wheels, the thing becomes complicated, and the energy invested in the pull at one end becomes dissipated before it reaches the other. Let me cite a case in point. Look at this letter lying on my desk! It is from a very excellent young lady connected with my congregation:

*'Dear Sir,—My friend, Jessie Strachan, called to see me this afternoon and was saying how pleased she is that her brother, Claude, is attending the evening services. She asked me, as I know you, to write begging you to speak to him about his soul. She has for a long time desired to do so herself, but doesn't like to. She thinks that a word from you would do good.'*

Every minister of any experience has received scores of such letters. They represent the first clumsy efforts of well-meaning but immature young wirepullers. When Jessie Strachan gets a little older, she will discover that the secret of successful wirepulling lies in the direct pull. As yet, she has not learned that lesson. She wants to influence her

brother, so she runs her wire round my lady friend, and then round me, and she gets it entangled with the Church *en route*. I have seen a good deal of this kind of wirepulling, but I have never yet seen it achieve success. Let Jessie Strachan make a direct pull upon her brother! Let her show him by her ready sympathy, her sisterly affection, and her sweet helpfulness, what a lovely thing religion is. And then, her gentle yet noble behavior having won his confidence and admiration, and given her a queenly authority over him, let her carefully select her time and modestly unfold to him the wonderful secret of her own deep peace and joy! And she will be astonished at his readiness to share her radiant experience with her. The more direct the pull, the more effective it must of necessity be.

I should like Jessie Strachan to read the *Life of Cardinal Vaughan*. For Cardinal Vaughan's mother was the most brilliantly successful wirepuller of whom I have ever heard. She became a Roman Catholic just before her marriage, and threw herself with all her heart and soul into the worship and service of that Church. In course of time, she became the mother of eight sons and five daughters. For this great family of hers she had one passionate aspiration: she yearned unceasingly that all her boys might become priests and that all her daughters might become nuns. She never preached to them or lectured them: it is doubtful if she ever mentioned her desire. But she lost no opportunity of

magnifying in the eyes of her children the sacredness and beauty of the life that she so ardently coveted for each of them. She skilfully turned every conversation in that direction. She took infinite pains in telling them stories of splendid heroism and magnificent devotion, always taking care that every hero should be a priest and every heroine a nun. Through all the years in which her children were about her knees, she spent an hour a day in prayer, pleading in an agony of fervent supplication that it might please the Great Head of the Church to call every one of her children to serve him in the choir or in the sanctuary. She got her way. All five of the girls entered convents; and all the eight boys went at their own desire to ecclesiastical seminaries. Two never actually became priests; but they strongly desired to do so, and only turned back because they felt themselves unfitted to serve the altar. Let a woman once make up her mind what it is that she wants; let her conscience applaud her desire; let her learn the subtle secret of the direct pull; and there is scarcely any limit to the triumph that this wondrous wirepuller will achieve. It was so ordained.

# PART II

# I

## THE YOKE OF YOUTH

It is past eleven as Roy Blackburn turns his latch-key in the door. It is stocktaking time at the office, and, night after night, he has been under the irksome necessity of returning to his desk. He enters the dining-room, and, tired out, throws himself into the comfortable arm-chair that is drawn up ready for him beside a blazing fire. He does not even trouble to light the gas: the room is cheerfully —and restfully—illumined by the flickering firelight. Half-an-hour ago, Roy's landlady and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. Holloway, had occupied the arm-chairs on either side of the fire, and in the hope that Roy would yet join them, had sat chatting there a little later than usual. Abandoning at length all hope of his appearance, they had gone to bed; but, before doing so, Mrs. Holloway had spread his supper on the table, and had left the kettle singing merrily upon the trivet.

Stretching out his legs and burying his hands in his pockets, Roy resigns himself for a few minutes to the seductions of the cosy chair; the cakes and cocoa that Mrs. Holloway has so temptingly prepared can wait a little. He reflects gratefully that

the tiresome business that has monopolized so many of his evenings is finished at last; and is glad that, for awhile at least, the hours after tea will be once more his own. Roy is a tremendous fellow, and is extremely popular both at the office and among his friends. He is tall, square-shouldered, and sturdily built, with pleasant face and laughing eyes. He impresses you as being clean and straight and open-hearted. His curly black hair falls in ringlets about his lofty forehead. He came of age last Easter, but looks a year or two older. He is a great athlete, and is proud of his silver trophies. Generous to a fault, he would make any sacrifice to help a friend. As he lolls back in the chair, his eye is attracted by a large sheet of paper lying on the hearthrug, smothered from top to bottom in the pencilled scrawl of Mrs. Holloway's little daughter. Roy and Birdie are great chums. He picks it up; leans forward so that the firelight may fall full upon it; and reads with a smile the words that Birdie had been so industriously scribbling. It is evidently the text that she has been asked to learn for next Sunday. At her mother's suggestion, Birdie has written it twenty times. *It is good for a man that he bare the yoak in his yooth.* Roy chuckles over the mistakes in the spelling, promising himself heaps of fun at Birdie's expense in the morning, and then proceeds to mix his cocoa and enjoy his lonely supper. Having disposed of the last morsel, he again yields himself without reserve to the comforts of the chair. He

glances at the companion chair on the opposite side of the hearth, and wishes that Aggie were occupying it.

'Poor old Aggie!' he says to himself, 'I have scarcely seen her this week: she will think I'm cooling off: I must make up for lost time to-morrow!'

He lights a cigarette, smokes it, tosses the butt into the fire, and closes his eyes. And then that strange thing happens which, under similar circumstances, overtakes us all. His exhausted brain, worn out, goes to sleep; his restive imagination, eager for exercise, wakes up; and out of that whimsical combination of contrarieties is spun the stuff that dreams are made of. In a moment it seems to him that the arm-chair opposite is no longer vacant. It is occupied, and occupied *by himself!* And yet, as he scrutinizes the face more closely, he doubts whether it is indeed himself. The man opposite looks several years older: the face more sedate and serious. Another moment, and it is clear that the figure in the other chair is undergoing some magic metamorphosis; he is now a bearded man in the full tide of life. A stately and beautiful woman—in whose fine features Roy thinks he recognizes some trace of Aggie—moves busily about him; whilst little children scamper in and out and clamber on his knee. And now his raven hair is black no longer: it is silver-grey; he wears spectacles: and young men and women approach him with reverent fond-

ness and filial regard. One of them has a little child in her arms. Again, his hair is snowy-white. He is no longer erect, nimble and athletic: his back is bent: his face is wizened and his brow furrowed. He is very, very old. Roy waits, expecting the vision to change its form—as the previous visions have done. But, unlike the others, *this* vision remains. The old man holds his place in the opposite chair, breathing heavily, and muttering something about being too old to work and too proud to beg. He looks unhappy, Roy thinks; and, now that he has time to inspect him more minutely, he notices that his clothes are sadly worn and faded. Now, too, for the first time, Roy addresses his strange companion.

'You look miserable, old man, have you no one whose duty it is to care for you?'

*'Only you!'* replies the aged figure, in a voice so hollow and melancholy that it makes Roy start in his slumber.

'You look neglected, old man,' Roy goes on; 'have you no one to feed, clothe, and support you?'

*'Only you!'*

The mournful ejaculation comes back in the same sepulchral tone. Again Roy starts and moves uneasily in his chair.

'You will soon be dying, old man,' Roy says, speaking a third time; 'have you no one to bury you?'

*'Only you!'*

The words are repeated with a monotony so dismal that they startle the sleeper out of his dreams. He awakes with a shiver. He is cold. The fire has burned itself out. The room is dark and chilly. Roy sits bolt upright; rubs his eyes; and then strains them in a prolonged stare at the arm-chair opposite. It looks ghostly in its emptiness. He rises, stretches himself, and, smiling at his own weird fancies, goes to bed. All this happened many years ago.

Roy went to bed that night, but not to sleep. His fancy was teased in turns by the *text* upon the floor and the *phantom* in the chair. He scarcely knew what Birdie's ill-spelt text had to do with the tottering old figure in the arm-chair; but, at such times, the most incongruous and ill-assorted things associate themselves with each other in our confused and drowsy brains. And so, though poor Roy turned and twisted upon his pillow to avoid them, the text kept saying: *It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth; it is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth; it is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth;* and the withered figure in the chair kept saying, *'Only you! Only you! Only you!'* But Roy was very tired; and after awhile, Nature asserted her authority. The two voices—the voice of Birdie's text and the voice of the figure in the chair—grew fainter and fainter. They seemed to come from the other side of the room; then from the other side of the street; then

from an infinite distance away; and then they faded into silence. Poor Roy was asleep at last!

What is it that happens whilst we slumber? How is it that I go to sleep confused and wake up clear? I go to bed struggling frantically to think of the name of a person I have met, or endeavoring to recall a quotation from a poem I have heard. But it is of no use; the name is on the tip of my tongue, but nothing will induce it to leave that tantalizing vantage point; the poem is at the back of my mind, but I cannot lure it forward. But, when I awake in the morning, the name shouts itself into my ear and the poem sings itself into my soul. I go to sleep in a torture of indecision and uncertainty: I wake up seeing my course set unmistakably before me. Rapt Isaiah, with his wild seraphic fire, speaks of *the treasures of the darkness.* I do not know exactly what he means; but this must surely be one of those treasures. Roy entered into *the treasures of the darkness* that night. And when morning came, bringing light and joy and energy and love, he realized the wealth of his enrichment. For the things that, overnight, had been a jumble of confused ideas, stood harmonized and co-ordinated before him. He saw, as clearly as he saw all the other objects upon which the sun was shining, the connection between the text—Birdie's text—and the decrepit figure in the arm-chair.

On the way to the office he could think of nothing else. Nature was busy around him. It was in the

early spring-time. Life was breaking into new forms everywhere. And, by means of all these lovely things, Nature seemed to be whispering a secret to Roy's soul. In spring-time and summer-time Nature thinks of autumn-time and winter-time; in the days of her super-abundant vitality she makes bountiful provision for the days of her decay. The year bears *the yoke* in *its youth*. Roy began to understand. Life is a thing that has to be levelled out. It needs poising, adjusting, balancing. Like a torrent in full flood, youth is brimming over with vivacious energy. Roy thinks of his silver trophies: they are the product of the overflow of his redundant powers. In youth the blood is tingling in the veins; the muscles are itching for exercise; life is abounding, exuberant, effervescing. Age, on the other hand, is over-loaded, oppressed, overwhelmed. It stands appalled at the magnitude of life's burdens and at the meagreness of its own resources. Youth is like a balloon without a car: it requires ballast and balance. Age is like a car without a balloon; it is heavy and hugs the ground. Now Nature adjusts this balance very cleverly. The overflow of her summer fruitage sustains the barren months of wintry desolation. On precisely the same principle, she ordains that the superfluity of youthful vigor shall nourish and protect the decrepitude of age. The process will give ballast to the buoyancy of youth: the balloon is the steadier for the car. And the crushing misfortunes of old age—the misfor-

tunes represented by the phantom of the arm-chair—will thus be relieved or altogether averted. As, on his way to the train, Roy watches the flowers peeping, the buds bursting, and the birds building, Nature goes a long way towards harmonizing in his mind the confused elements that haunted his weary brain the night before. He begins to see the connexion between Birdie's text on the one hand and the desolate figure in the arm-chair on the other.

In the course of the morning, further light breaks upon him. It occurs to him that the firm with which he is connected takes no unnecessary risks. They make provision for all kinds of contingencies, some of which will certainly eventuate, whilst others may never come. The place may never be burned down, for example, yet the Company spends a considerable sum every year on fire insurance. On the other hand, the buildings and machinery are falling slowly, but surely, into decay; they cannot possibly last for ever: and Roy notices that, in the balance-sheet, a certain amount is written off for depreciation. These hard-headed business men have a way of putting a telescope to their eyes and looking into the distant future. The possibilities of coming days are foreseen and provided for. Roy thinks of the wretched old man in the arm-chair. He hears once more his sad and melancholy accents. *'Only you!'* he said; *'Only you; Only you!'* He thinks, too, of Birdie's text: *It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.* Roy resolved, that very afternoon,

to saddle his strong young shoulders with the burden of that yoke. He took pity on the figure in the arm-chair, and vowed that he would bring the smile back to the old man's lips and the song back to the old man's soul. That evening he arrived at Pelham Place earlier than he had ever done before. He bore in his hand a posy of violets. Aggie pretended to receive them coldly.

'I'm glad,' she exclaimed, archly, 'that you still remember the way to Pelham Place. I thought you might happen to call in again one of these days. Why, you don't look much older, you don't really!'

He punished her in his own way; she bore it with wonderful resignation; and soon afterwards discovered that a new excitement was simmering in his breast.

'You'll never guess what I've done this afternoon, Aggie;' he burst out; and as, of course, she couldn't, he told her. 'I've insured my life! It'll cost a heap of money; and my wife—if ever I have such a thing—will have to help me to keep it up; but I'll get quite a fortune out of it when I grow old; and, if I don't happen to grow old, why, then my wife—if ever I have such a thing—will get the fortune when I die!'

She boxed his ears for his pains. 'What an old sobersides it is that has come back to us after all this time!' she exclaimed, pouting prettily. But she secretly thought all the more of him.

The following Sunday they went to church

together. It was one of those luxurious spring mornings that make life seem a perfect revelry; and, even had the day been dull, there was enough sunshine in their hearts and eyes to make it a delight. The service was in keeping with the beauty of the morning. It began with the hymn *How pleased and blest was I!* And Roy and Aggie felt that it was perfectly attuned to their happiness. And then, by one of those odd coincidences that make truth so much stranger than fiction, the minister preached on Birdie's text: *It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.* The Rev. George Jones was a good old man, honored and revered by everybody. He referred to none of the things that had so exercised Roy's mind during the week. He began by saying that the text was Lord Northcliffe's favorite text. And, towards the end of his discourse, he uttered a few telling sentences that neither of the young people ever forgot.

'It is,' he said, 'the duty of every young man to relieve his old age of every burden that he can possibly lift from his shoulders. Youth should saddle itself with the burden of *restraint,* so that Age may never feel the pressure of *remorse.* Youth should take up the burden of *achievement* that Age may never be crushed beneath a load of *shame.* As I review my own life,' the preacher added, 'I am more thankful than I can express that, in youth, I was led to shoulder the strenuous yoke of Christian service: otherwise my old age must have been borne

down with bitter and futile regrets. I am something like Sir George Burns, whose biography I have read this week. George Burns dotted the Atlantic with the first steamships, and, at the age of ninety-four, was knighted by Queen Victoria. "Men say," he wrote, at about that time, "men say that mine has been a most prosperous career. It is true, and I am thankful for it. But, looking back upon life, as I do now, this reflection gives me no satisfaction: there is nothing in *that* fact on which I can rest. But when I read, as I have been reading lately, the letters written by myself seventy years ago, and when I find that, even then, I had definitely decided to serve Christ, *that* knowledge indeed rejoices my heart in my old age." ' The preacher closed with an earnest appeal to the young people in his congregation. *'His yoke is easy,'* he said, *'and His burden is light.* Take it upon you, and, to the last day of your life, it will multiply all your joys!'

On the way home, Roy and Aggie said very little; but their thoughts were busy. Very often in the happy years that followed, they would talk about that service, and, from it, they dated much of their felicity.

## II

## THE STOCKMAN

I WAS lounging in a deck-chair on the lawn this afternoon when the postman handed me Keith Gladden's bulky letter. It seemed odd to see Keith's familiar handwriting on an envelope smothered with Chinese stamps and Chinese postmarks. And it seemed stranger still to see the photograph of Keith, in Chinese dress, which fell into my lap as soon as I opened the envelope. Keith is a missionary in Shen-Si, and has, for years, been doing magnificent work there. But, when I knew him, he was a boy on a New Zealand cattle-run. Keith refers, in his letter, to those far-off days. 'Do you remember,' he asks, 'the morning we spent watching the stockmen separating from the mob in the home paddock the cattle that father was sending down to Sunset Creek?' I remember it perfectly; it was the first experience of the kind that I had known; and I thought that I had never seen anything so tumultuous and exciting.

I can see at this moment those hundreds of cattle careering madly about the huge paddock whilst, with finely trained horses and resounding whips, the stockmen cornered and caught the particular animals

that they wished separated from the herd. Keith and I sat on the sliprail that day and felt the thrill of it all as, time after time, the thunder of hoofs swept past us. He was tremendously excited, and shouted boyish advice and encouragement to the men whenever their wild gallop brought them within earshot.

It is not to the incident itself, however, but to the conversation to which it led, that Keith refers in his letter. I could not help watching him as he sat perched on the rail beside me. I thought him quite as fascinating as the stirring scene that we had come to witness. As I marked his well-knit frame and sinewy limbs, his easy and athletic movements, his fine intelligent face with its flashing eyes and its quick changes of expression, and as I felt the influence of his boyish innocence and abounding enthusiasm, I could not help thinking my own thoughts about him. And I suppose that my thoughts betrayed themselves on our way back to the homestead.

'Keith,' I said taking his arm, 'I wish I could do for you what the stockmen have done for the cattle that we saw yarded just now!'

'Well,' I continued, in answer to his question, 'I often feel, when I look down from the pulpit and see your face in the congregation, that I would give anything if I could somehow separate you from the crowd and make you understand that everything I was saying was just for *you!*'

One of the stockmen, riding up from behind, overtook us just at that moment, and, dismounting, walked back with us to the homestead. No more was said at the time, therefore, but afterwards Keith himself revived the subject. It was after church on the following Sunday evening. I had been preaching on that monumental text: *God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* I was, as I thought, the last to leave the building; but, when I reached the gate, I found Keith waiting to walk home with me.

'All the while you were preaching,' he said, 'I was thinking about what you said: and it seemed as though you were talking to me alone. Everything is so different: I can hardly take it in!'

There was a quiver in his voice that told me of the depth and intensity of his emotion. I have no right to drag into the light of day the sacred confidences that immediately followed. It is enough for my present purpose to say that, at our next communion, Keith was received into the membership of the Church; and, in his letters from Shen-Si, he still refers to the morning that we spent together at the old homestead as the turning-point in his life.

The fact is that the only effective congregation that a minister can have is a congregation of one. In the *Life of Edward Payson* it is recorded that, on a stormy Sunday, the famous preacher had but one hearer. Mr. Payson preached his sermon, how-

ever, as carefully and as earnestly as though the great building had been thronged with eager listeners. Some months afterwards his solitary auditor called on him.

'I was led to the Saviour through that service,' he said. 'For, whenever you talked about sin and salvation, I glanced round to see to whom you referred; but, since there was no one there but myself, I had no alternative but to lay every word to my own heart and conscience!'

Mr. Chesterton says that between one and two, there is often a difference of millions. There is certainly a difference of millions between a congregation of one and a congregation of two. A congregation of one takes every word in a direct and personal and practical sense; but, in a congregation of two, each auditor takes it for granted that the preacher is referring to the other. Nathan had a congregation of one when he unfolded his parable of the one ewe lamb, and, looking into the face of David, cried: *Thou art the man!* Mr. Payson had a congregation of one that wintry morning. And, blest in that way, neither Nathan nor Mr. Payson had any difficulty in bringing his congregation to its knees.

The preacher who has a congregation of hundreds is in a hopeless situation. A crowd has no conscience to be stirred, no heart to be broken, and no soul to be saved. The man who stands before a crowd can only hope to succeed so far as he knows how to disentangle the individual from the mass.

Like the stockmen at Keith Gladden's old home, who, riding into a mob of cattle, swiftly and cleverly separated from its fellows the animal that they required, the preacher must know the secret of segregating the individual. Wesley and Whitefield, Spurgeon and Moody knew how to preach to crowds. They conquered the crowd by ignoring it. So far from forgetting the individual in the crowd, they forgot the crowd in the individual. They liked to see a multitude of faces, just as an angler likes to feel that his line is surrounded by a multitude of fish; it enhances his chance of catching, in quick succession, first one fish and then another; but that is all. To the great evangelists the crowd was simply the multiplied opportunity of individual conquest.

The converts of these master-preachers have left on record some thousands of testimonies. In one important respect they are all alike. They all contain some such phrase as this: 'He seemed to be speaking directly to me, as though I were the only person present!' Take Wesley for example. 'Wesley's words,' Southey says, 'were like the eyes of a portrait, which seem to look at every beholder.' One of the greatest days in Wesley's life was June 17, 1739. It was the day on which he preached for the first time at Moorfields. The service was held at seven o'clock in the morning, and there were seven thousand people present. Mr. Wesley took for his text the words: *Seek ye the Lord while He may be*

*found; call ye upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.* The service was made doubly historic; for, in the *first* place, it was the beginning of the great work at Moorfields, and, in the *second,* it led to the conversion of John Nelson, the stonemason, 'a man who,' as Southey says, 'had as high a spirit and as brave a heart as ever Englishman was blessed with.' A little later, Mr. Wesley preached to an immense concourse at Kennington on the same text, and, among others, a soldier was converted. I have found it extremely interesting to piece together, and examine in detail, the records of those memorable services. Fortunately, both the stonemason and the soldier have reduced to writing, as Mr. Wesley liked all his converts to do, the story of their experiences.

'When Mr. Wesley stood up and stroked back his hair,' says the stonemason, 'I thought he fixed his eyes on me; and, when he spoke, I thought his whole discourse was aimed directly at me!'

'When Mr. Wesley began to speak,' says the soldier, 'his words made me tremble. I thought he spoke to no one but me; and I durst not look up, for I imagined that all the people were looking at me!'

On each occasion there were thousands present, yet Mr. Wesley made each hearer feel that preacher

and listener were alone together. Every man felt as David felt when Nathan pointed directly at him and cried, *Thou art the man!* It is a great art.

Here lies the rationale of all our companionships, our comradeships, our partnerships. One of the prophets describes two caravans meeting in the desert. The first one approaches a certain spot and waits there until the other comes up. 'They did not meet by chance,' the prophet says; 'they had an appointment!' And he argues that whenever two of us meet upon the highway of life, we meet for the same reason. It has been so timed and arranged. We are pilgrims of eternity, and we do not cross each other's paths by accident. *'Can two walk together,'* Amos demands, *'except by appointment?'* We meet as they meet who have important business to transact the one with the other; we meet as those who shall give account of their meeting at the great day. We meet; and it can never be, for either of us, as though we had never met. We meet, and, having met, life can never be quite the same again. That is why Elijah looks so earnestly into the face of Ahab; that is why Paul deals so faithfully with Felix; that is why Nathan points so clearly his parable to David; that is why Ambrose deals so uncompromisingly with the Emperor Theodosius; that is why Savonarola frowns so sternly upon Lorenzo the Magnificent; that is why Little Bilney pleads so passionately with Father Latimer; that is why Latimer himself denounces to his face the

sins of King Henry the Eighth; that is why John Knox hardens his heart against the tears of Mary. Each of these men feels that the individual is the strategic point in the whole situation. He feels that the face into which he looks is the face of an immortal; eternal issues are at stake; the meeting is divinely ordained; the opportunity is too precious to be lost; and he pours out his soul in passionate rebuke and persuasive entreaty. I have just read the *Life of Sampson Staniforth.* Matthew Arnold thought that Staniforth's record of his conversion deserved to rank with Paul's narrative of his experience on the road to Damascus. Yet, summed up, it is simply the story of a friendship. Mark Bond and Sampson Staniforth were fellow-soldiers. Their camping and campaigning threw them much together. Mark Bond felt that their association was no freak of circumstance. He set himself to win his comrade for his Saviour; and the record of his success is, as so eminent a critic as Matthew Arnold confesses, one of the masterpieces of religious literature.

Traveling along this line of research, my footsteps led me to two of the great romances of the faith. One is a romance of the ocean; the other is a romance of the desert. The *first* concerns Dr. George Augustus Selwyn. When, as the first colonial bishop, Dr. Selwyn was sent out from England, his See included, not only the whole of New Zealand, but all the scattered islands of the Pacific.

Undaunted by the magnitude of his task, he resolved to attempt the evangelization of these countless peoples. He tramped New Zealand from end to end, and he bought a schooner—the *Undine*—on which he hoped to visit all the islands. But he saw that, in the brief periods that he could snatch from his main work in New Zealand, it would be absurd to attempt missionary work, in the ordinary sense, along those scattered groups. It would take years to acquire the languages, understand the customs, and overcome the prejudices of the islanders. He determined to resort to strategy. The individual must become the key to the situation. He took a boy from *this* island and a boy from *that* one; he persuaded them to accompany him to New Zealand; and then he bent all his energies to winning them for Christ. Afterwards he returned each of these converts to his native island to evangelize his own people. In this way the Pacific was soon dotted with active evangelistic agencies, and the coral reefs and cannibal islands soon heard, from men of their own blood and language, the words of life eternal.

The *second* of these romances is one of the innumerable romances of darkest Africa. 'Night,' —so runs the story—'night has fallen on the heart of the Soudan. The stars cast their thin streams of light serenely down upon a circle of men who are gathered on the outskirts of Khartoum. In the centre of the circle stands a tall young white missionary, athletic in build and powerful of voice.'

This young fellow has been oppressed by the consciousness that, out yonder, beyond the desert, there are millions upon millions of natives who have never heard the holiest name of all. But how can he help them? A sudden inspiration seizes him. They are divided into a score of nationalities. He will send to each tribe and entreat a man to join him. He will make these men the key to the solution of the problem. And now, for weeks, he has had his band of tribesmen clustered about him. He has spared no effort to lead them into the Kingdom of Christ, so that they, in turn, may point the way to others. The last night has come. 'To-morrow'—so the record continues—'the little band will break up, and each man will go back to his own people. Very solemnly, as they sit in the stillness of the night, their teacher speaks to them of the work that Christ requires of them. He pictures all their difficulties and their risks—the imminent possibility of a cruel death. Then, quite plainly, he puts the issue before them: "Which of you is ready and will promise aloud to try to make Jesus King of your tribe—King over all its heart and life?" He waits in the darkness for their reply. At first there is nothing but silence that can be felt. He knows that for many of them the promise may mean death. Suddenly one of them breaks the silence with a strong, clear voice: "Ina So," he says, "I will." Then another and another "Ina So"; "Ina So," they say, "I will"; "I will," till every man in that circle

has pledged himself, even at the cost of his life, to make Christ King of his own tribe. Then the group breaks up and each man seeks his rest till daybreak—the break of day that is to witness the inauguration of his great task of King-making. "Next morning," says the white man, "I watched them go, those King-makers of mine. How they fare I shall never know till the great day declares it!" '

It is the old secret, Nathan's secret, the secret of the stockman, the secret of individual conquest. The best work in the world is not done wholesale. Crowds are only precious for the sake of the individuals that compose them. It is only by Nathan's fidelity to David that earth's vast continents can be conquered and its countless islands won.

## III

## THE LADY OF THE LAKE

The Lady of the Lake would not know herself by that name. We ourselves gave it to her. We sometimes speak of the cup of tea that we sipped in her company as the nicest we have ever tasted. The whole experience was tinged with novelty, quaintness, and romance. We were boating on one of Australia's vast inland waters. For hours we had been poking about among the picturesque little coves and inlets, admiring the riot of forestry, the exquisite reflections, and the abundance of wild life. As the nose of the boat glided silently round each point, thousands of swans, pelicans, cranes, and moorhens rose in noisy and excited alarm, whilst, every now and again, a big brown kangaroo would go bounding up through the tangle of bush. Presently we came upon a waterway that differed from the rest. It ran back so deeply among the hills that we fancied that it must be a river pouring its waters into the lake. We set out to explore. At each turn and twist, a fresh panorama of beauty was unfolded to us. After persevering for half an hour, we came to the end of the water: it was only an arm of the lake after all. But, as we were preparing to return, a fresh wonder unfolded itself. We discovered a

track leading up through the bush; and, on a tree near the water's edge, we read the words, *'Afternoon Tea.'* In this outlandish spot the announcement struck us as extraordinary. We stared incredulously. How often was this place visited? What custom could the caterers expect? Prompted partly by curiosity, and partly by the appetite which our outing had awakened, we ascended the track. The hill-side was musical with the notes of the bell-birds. Shy as the little creatures usually are, these were so tame that they allowed us to get quite close to them. As we approached the cottage that now appeared through the trees, a little old lady, as neatly attired as though she had been expecting visitors, came forward to meet us. She greeted us like an old familiar friend, and placed seats for us on the verandah.

'Now this is very fortunate,' she exclaimed, rubbing her hands; 'I've been making some scones this very afternoon; come along and sit down!'

She sat with us for a few minutes, talking of everything under the sun. Then, excusing herself, she bustled off to get the tea. Whilst she prepared it, we strolled round her trim little garden. Everything was as neat and tidy as the little old lady herself. Afternoon tea consisted of the hot scones, of which she was manifestly proud, some home-made cakes, and delicious tea served in quaint old china cups. It was prepared on the verandah; provision was made for three; it was clear that the old lady

regarded herself as a member of our party. Nor was she the only addition to our number. For, as we drew near the cottage, we noticed a big wattlebird perched on the back of one of the chairs and helping herself to the sugar in the basin. We stood still and watched. To our surprise, the bird herself broke the silence. She lifted up her voice in a terrific 'squawk.' We were astonished at her endangering her felicity by giving the alarm; but the explanation swiftly appeared. In answer to the call, a young bird fluttered down from a tall tree near by, and, with beak wide open, settled on the table just beside the sugar-basin. The mother bird then joined her offspring on the table, and, with incredible celerity, shovelled the sugar into the open mouth of the younger bird. The sugar was rapidly disappearing when the old lady appeared in the doorway. She clapped her hands and waved her apron to scare the birds away, and pretended to be horrified at our complicity in the theft. As we sat at tea we asked her why she stayed in that lonely place.

'Well,' she said, 'sometimes I've thought of leaving; but it's the only home I've ever had in this country, and I can't bear to leave it now. And then,' she added, after a pause, 'did you not notice two graves on the hill-side?'

We remembered looking up at the two stones standing all by themselves among the scrub.

'I feel,' she said, 'that I cannot go away and leave them.'

'Well, this has been a great treat,' she exclaimed, a quarter of an hour later, when we rose to take our departure. 'There's nothing in the world like a nice cup of tea and a heart-to-heart talk about things.'

'Oh dear, no,' she added, as I offered to pay her, 'it's only once or twice in the year that anybody comes; and I couldn't think of charging for it. I shall think about this for months to come!'

She insisted on accompanying us down the track to the boat, and, when we rowed round the point, she was still standing among the ferns waving good-bye. We have often spoken of it since, and in our conversation we always call her the Lady of the Lake.

'There's nothing in the world like a nice cup of tea!' I fancy I hear her saying it now. The Lady of the Lake reminds me of little Mother Mannikin in *A Peep Behind the Scenes.* Mother Mannikin, it will be remembered, was one of the queer little ladies from the caravan of dwarfs, and so soon as Rosalie's poor mother was stricken with a sudden sickness, Rosalie flew from her own caravan to that in which the Royal Show of Dwarfs dwelt, and called for Mother Mannikin.

Mother Mannikin had a cup of tea ready almost directly. She was the quickest little body Rosalie had ever seen; yet she was so quiet that her quick movements did not in the least disturb the sick woman.

'How kind you are!' said Rosalie's mother, as the dwarf climbed on a chair to give her the tea.

'There's nothing like tea!' said the tiny old woman, nodding her wise little head, 'give me a cup of tea, and I don't care what I go without!'

No, there's nothing like tea! As a boy I thought of a cup of tea as so much liquid prophecy. I watched the kisses rising to the surface from the melting sugar, and I counted curiously the strangers that would soon be coming. And, later on, I learned that a cup of tea is not only liquid prophecy, but liquid history. If I turn to the *East,* I see the transformation that tea has brought. 'It has changed the face of India,' says Sir John Rees. 'The abodes of savagery—the haunts of the dreaded head-hunters—have been transformed into graceful and picturesque plantations!' And if I turn to the *West,* the evidence is no less striking. 'Tea is the biggest thing in American history,' declares Mr. N. H. Page, who was for some time the United States Ambassador in London. 'And if,' he says, 'tea had crossed the Atlantic a few generations earlier, the whole course of world-history would have been revolutionized.' A cup of tea is prophecy in solution: it is history in solution: it is everything in solution!

The possibilities of tea are simply infinite. By means of tea, Charles Simeon changed the face of the world. For fifty-four years he gave a tea-party every Friday evening; he invited the undergraduates of Cambridge University to his table; and states-

men like Macaulay and Wilberforce and Sir James Stephen have told us that, by means of those tea-parties, Charles Simeon did more for the evangelization of the world than any man of his generation. Hundreds of men left that modest tea-table and went forth to dispel the darkness of continents.

Old Doctor Samuel Johnson could have picked up the Lady of the Lake and little Mother Mannikin, and, slipping the one into one pocket and the other into the other, could have walked off with the pair of them. But the old doctor would have dealt very gently with them both, for their sentiments are very much to his taste. 'I am a hardened and shameless tea-drinker,' says the great man. 'For twenty years I have diluted my meals with nothing but the infusion of this fascinating plant. My kettle has scarcely time to cool. You may describe me as one who with tea amuses the evening, with tea solaces the midnight, and with tea welcomes the morning.' Now, this brings me into the atmosphere of controversy, and controversy I abhor. But one can see at a glance that this confession of Dr. Johnson's was not made in cold blood. There is heat in it, for the doctor was angry. The truth is that Mr. Jonas Hanway had been writing essays on every subject under the sun—an extremely reprehensible practice —and had at last written an essay on Tea. Now there are few more interesting men in that old time than this same Mr. Jonas Hanway. He advocated the abolition of chimney-sweeps before Lord

Shaftesbury; he shares with Robert Raikes the honor of having pioneered our Sunday Schools; and there was scarcely a philanthropic or charitable institution in England with which the name of Jonas Hanway was not associated. Not the least among his good works was his popularization of the umbrella. Until then, when the rain came, a man jumped into a hackney coach; and the cabmen thought that good Master Hanway had ruined their trade when he set the new fashion. But when the reformer, with all the zeal of a modern temperance advocate, hurled his thunderbolts among the tea-cups, he brought upon his innocent old head the wrath of Oliver Goldsmith, Samuel Johnson, and a host of others. Mr. Hanway wrote an angry answer to Johnson's review; and Johnson, after a full and deliberate pause, fired a second shot. Boswell says that it is the only instance in the whole course of his life in which the doctor condescended to notice anything that was written against him. But Mr. Hanway had touched the doctor on a very tender spot. Nobody, as Boswell remarks, was ever more fond of the infusion of the fragrant leaf than he was. He drank it immoderately, and, by setting the fashion, assured the triumph of the tea-pot.

Poor old Jonas Hanway is dead; but he, being dead, yet speaketh. And poor old Samuel Johnson is dead; and he, being dead, yet speaketh. And, still speaking, they both talk about tea. The clash of their wordy warfare even invades the churches.

Jonas Hanway, dead but still speaking, pours out the vials of his withering scorn and contempt on our ecclesiastical tea-drinking. 'In the old time,' he says, 'Ezekiel saw rivers of *water* rushing out from beneath the temple; if he looked to-day he would see rivers of *tea*. Fie upon you! It is whispered that next month the Church will celebrate another anniversary of her testimony, and a general rush takes place for the tea-pot. The Sunday School has completed another year of service among the young; where's the tea-pot? The minister sends in his resignation; get out the tea-pot! Here comes the new minister; is the tea-pot ready? A member of the choir is about to be married; hurry out the tea-pot! A fresh teacher has been appointed to take charge of the Bible Class; where do you keep the tea-pot! The reading circle has finished with Dickens and is about to start on Tennyson; is there any tea in the tea-pot? One of the members of the Guild is just off for a trip; run to the cupboard for the tea-pot! Poor, overworked tea-pot! If some of you toiled half as hard as the tea-pot, what a Church your Church would be! 'Fie upon you, fie upon you,' cries old Master Hanway, excitedly flourishing his huge umbrella the while, 'fie upon you for a generation of guzzlers and tea-bibbers!'

But when the old gentleman begins to talk like this in our courts and assemblies, he always brings Dr. Johnson to his feet. It is more than he can endure. 'Sir!' the doctor thunders, 'do you not

recognize that religion has its social side! Have you never read that of olden time men saw God and did eat and drink? Are you not aware that religious service consists in common friendship and mutual helpfulness? Can you not see, Sir, that, to minister effectively to each other, men must know each other? Would you have the members of your congregation to come silently in, and to steal silently out, aloof, distant, remote—isolated units, strangers to each other? Is that your idea? A rope of sand, Sir!' the doctor roars, bringing his huge hand down on the table with a terrific bang. 'A rope of sand, I tell you! No, Sir, bring out the tea-pot! Get them together! Let them eat together and drink together! Let them chatter and gossip and talk! Yes, Sir, let them talk! And what will make them talk like tea, Sir? Tell me that—what will unloose their tongues like a good cup of steaming, fragrant tea? Be thankful for tea, I tell you, and the more you use your tea-pot the better!' And the doctor resumes his seat with a glance of withering scorn at his ancient enemy.

In this furious controversy my sympathies are entirely with Dr. Johnson—and Mr. Hanway! They are, as is usual in such wordy warfares, both right. We must, of course, develop the social side of folk. Christian friendship is one of the sweetest and most precious things under God's great stars. And anything that can be done to create and foster it, it is obviously our duty to do. And yet, for all that,

I own to a sneaking sympathy with Mr. Hanway. We must not trust the tea-pot too implicitly. It has its dangers. The social side of church life is not the highest. It is good, but it is not the best; and the good is often the enemy of the best. Second things have an awkward knack of usurping the place of first things. And if the Church allows the tea-pot to dominate the situation, her prestige has been sacrificed and the glory has departed.

In the *Clerical Life,* there appears a letter from a distracted young minister, who finds that afternoon tea is becoming the menace of his ministry. 'My list for next week,' he says, 'is longer than ever. On Monday I have promised to take tea with old Mrs. Ledwell, to celebrate the news of her son's safety in the war. On Tuesday, Miss Bellhurst hopes I will look in for half-an-hour, as it is her fifty-seventh birthday, and she feels lonely with none of her relatives near her. Mrs. Lapham reminded me this evening that Wednesday was her quarterly tea-drinking for the girls of her Bible Class. On Thursday, Mrs. Brock hopes I will spare time to take tea at her boarding-house, as she specially wishes to introduce to me a young gentleman of wonderful artistic talent.' And so on. Now, what's to be done? Shall our perplexed young minister visit the poor and the sick and the dying, go to the hospitals and attend the committees? or shall he sip the tea that these ladies are preparing for his delectation? He confesses in his letter to an uncom-

fortable feeling that, if he does his duty, the church attendance of Mrs. Ledwell and Miss Bellhurst, Mrs. Lapham and Mrs. Brock will suffer in consequence. It is an awful pity, for they are very nice ladies, and they really mean well. Let us talk it all over. Even Mr. Hanway will join our little tea party on this occasion, and we will ask the Lady of the Lake to pour out.

You are quite right, little Lady of the Lake, a cup of tea on that hill-side verandah of yours is very, very nice!

You are quite right, Mother Mannikin, there is nothing like tea, nothing like tea!

You are quite right, Mr. Hanway, the tea-pot has grave perils!

You are quite right, Dr. Johnson, the tea-pot has great possibilities.

You are most kind, ladies all, and your tea parties are most pleasant!

Your conscience speaks truly, poor distracted young minister; you must do your duty, come what may!

*'Thank God for the tea-pot!'* says Dr. Johnson, pouring himself out another cup whilst the Lady of the Lake has for a moment turned her back, *'thank God for the tea-pot.'*

'Amen!' say I.

*'Beware of the tea-pot!'* says old Jonas Hanway, returning his scarcely tasted cup to the table, to the evident sorrow of the Lady of the Lake, towards

whom little Mother Mannikin benevolently directs a glance of affectionate sympathy. *'Beware of the tea-pot!'* he murmurs.

And once more I say 'Amen!'

## IV

## ALL FOOLS' DAY

It is the first of April. I will not explain how I made the discovery except to mention casually that we keep a boy in the house. But, now that the theme has been brought so pointedly under my notice, I may as well pursue it. There are fools *and* fools. Wise men will therefore show their wisdom by discriminating. 'Nothing is more characteristic of a man,' Amiel declares, 'than the manner in which he behaves towards fools.' That being so, it is obvious that our own commentators and pulpiteers have a lot to answer for. The Bible introduces us to certain fools; and, the moment that the Bible aims that opprobrious epithet at one of its characters, every preacher and expositor reaches for a stone to hurl at him. From innumerable painful instances of this kind of thing, let me, almost at random, select one. The Bible speaks of the fool who says in his heart that there is no God. Now turn to the commentators; and, of commentators, Mr. Spurgeon thought John Trapp the prince. 'Would it be possible,' Mr. Spurgeon asks, 'to eulogize too much the incomparably sententious and suggestive folios of John Trapp? Trapp is my espe-

cial companion and treasure; Trapp is salt, pepper, mustard, vinegar and all the other condiments; I can read him when I am too weary for anything else.' In my student days I had a five-pound note given me. On the strength of Mr. Spurgeon's eloquent encomiums, I straightway bought John Trapp. I have sometimes thought a little wistfully of that bank-note. But, to make up, in some measure, for lost time, I turn to Trapp to-day. And, as soon as John Trapp comes in sight of the man who says in his heart 'There is no God,' he immediately exhausts all his powers of vituperation and abuse. 'Oh, horrible!' he exclaims. 'To say in his heart "There is no God!" That fool! That sapless fellow! That carcase of a man! That walking sepulchre of himself, in whom all religion and right reason is withered and wasted, dried up and decayed! That apostate, in whom natural principles are extinct and from whom God is departed! That mere animal! That atheist!' And so on. I am pillorying poor John Trapp out of pure malice—malice born of regret for my lost bank-note. I do not know that he is worse than other commentators. Mr. Spurgeon says that, of all commentators, he is the best; and I have proved, in a practical way, my willingness to accept Mr. Spurgeon's dictum. I quote this savage outburst of his as typical of the tendency against which I this day raise my voice in protest. It by no means follows, because the Bible calls a man a fool, that *I* am entitled to do so. People who live in glass

houses must not throw stones. I need not elaborate that point.

I propose in this chapter to introduce three fools. David's fool—the fool who said in his heart that there is no God, the fool who awoke Master John Trapp's terrific outburst—will be one of them. I shall endeavor to show that he is the least foolish of the three. My three fools are the *Fool Positive, the Fool Comparative* and the *Fool Superlative.*

I

David's fool is the *Fool Positive.* He is a thoughtful fool, this fool; he thinks about God. And, in days when thoughtlessness is fairly common, no man who seriously thinks is to be altogether despised. He may think wrongly; but a man is better to think wrongly than not to think at all. He may reach a false conclusion; but a man is better to reach a false conclusion than to reach none.

This first fool is to be commended for his honesty. He *says* what he really *thinks.* He says *in his heart* 'There is no God.' Very few of us make our outward profession an exact reflection of our inward faith. We subscribe to creeds or confessions that are a size too big or a size too small for us. We sometimes minimize and sometimes magnify our doubts. This man recognizes that honesty should never be compromised for the sake of conformity. He really believes that there is no God; and he is too good a man to say that there is. Lord Morley argues that

there are few temptations greater than the temptation to gratify those whom we esteem by confessing a faith that we do not really hold. Husbands, especially, he thinks, are beset by this peril. Without intending to be insincere, they are tempted to confess the faith that their wives cherish. The position is brought about, Lord Morley maintains, very gradually. 'Marriages are often made early in life, before either man or woman has come to feel very deeply about religion either one way or another. The woman does not know how much she will need religion nor what comfort it may bring to her. The man does not know all the objections to it which may disclose themselves to his understanding as the years ripen.' As the time goes on, her filmy faith crystallizes into strong conviction and earnest devotion; he is shattered by the shocks and assaults to which it is every day exposed. But, rather than grieve her gentle spirit by confessing his unbelief, he continues to kneel at her side and to repeat prayers that, to him, are the hollowest of mockeries. Lord Morley maintains that, however pure and admirable the motive, the sin is a great and bitter one. It is a sin against his own soul, and a sin against hers. In relation to himself, it is a constant blasphemy; in relation to her, it is a constant deception. David's fool would have nothing to do with it. He said exactly what he felt.

He said it in the best possible place. He said it, not in the forum, nor even at the fireside, but *in his*

*heart.* As a wise fool, he recognized that *that* is essentially the place for the utterance of negations. Any man may be positive about a positive; but no man can be positive about a negative. Fifty expeditions may set out to search for a ship that is supposed to be drifting upon the high seas and may return without having caught a glimpse of her. No one of them can report with any confidence that the missing vessel is *not there.* But, if one man actually sights her, he is justified in affirming with the utmost confidence that she *is.*

No man ever yet helped the world by publishing a negation. Iconoclasm is the policy of despair. The hunger of the human heart can never be satisfied with denials. Stephen Grellet, the adventurous Quaker who took the world as his parish, came, in the course of his travels, upon Thomas Paine, the celebrated sceptic. Paine was dying, neglected and forsaken; and Stephen Grellet pitied him. He mentioned the case to other Quakers; and these good, quiet people vied with each other in showing kindness to the dying infidel. Among others, a young Quaker lady, Mary Roscoe, visited him constantly, taking with her dainties calculated to tempt the invalid's palate. One afternoon, Mr. Paine asked her if she had ever read any of his writings. She answered that she had read very little of them. He asked what she thought of them. 'From such as you,' he added, 'I expect a perfectly true answer.' She told him that, when she was quite a girl, his

*Age of Reason* was put into her hands; she told him that, the more she read it, the more dark and distressed her mind became; and she told him that she ended by flinging the volume on to the fire. The dying man looked half-pained and half-relieved. 'Oh, how I wish,' he moaned, 'that all had done as you did!' How he wished that, like David's fool, he had confided his negations to his own heart, and to his own heart only! There was method in the madness of the man who said *in his heart* 'There is no God.'

*The Fool Positive* expresses his dark negation in accents suited to its sadness. Beggars have told me of their penniless condition; but they never say it boisterously. Invalids have told me of their shattered health; but they never tell the story in gleeful tones. The man who has lost the sweet and beautiful faith of his childhood, the faith that his father and his mother cherished, will never speak flippantly of his loss. He will say in his heart 'There is no God'; but he will say it with a great lump in his throat, with moisture in his eyes, and with a great sob in the depths of his soul.

II

The *Fool Comparative* is Bunyan's fool. His name is Atheist; and, though obviously modelled on David's fool, he is incomparably the greater fool of the two.

*His temper is the temper of a fool.* 'Now after

awhile the pilgrims perceived, afar off, one coming softly and alone, along the highway, to meet them. Then said Christian to Hopeful, "Yonder is a man with his back toward Zion, and he is coming to meet us." When Atheist drew nearer, he asked them whither they were going. And, when Christian told him that they were going to Mount Zion, he fell into a very great laughter.' It is a laugh that sends a shudder down your spine. 'How much lies in laughter!' exclaims Carlyle. 'It is the cipher-key wherewith we interpret the whole man.' And Goethe used to say that a man reveals his character most clearly in the things that he considers laughable. And this man laughs over his lost faith! He laughs at his own disillusionment! He laughs at the trustfulness that he sees in the souls of others! There was no laughter in the heart of *David's* fool—the *Fool Positive*. The man who voices his atheism to the accompaniment of a giggle has reached a point to which salvation seldom comes.

*His behavior is the behavior of a fool.* 'I laugh,' he says, 'to see what ignorant persons you are, to take upon you so tedious a journey. I have been seeking this city these twenty years.' And, after twenty years' pilgrimage, he turns back! Men often give up at the very stage at which, most of all, they should keep on. The Burke and Wills expedition perished miserably in the dusty heart of Australia through turning back when almost within sight of the sheep-station at Mount Hopeless. Their camels

were all dead; their food supply was exhausted; they were themselves mere skeletons staggering grimly across burning sands. They knew that at Mount Hopeless, if only they could reach it, every comfort awaited them. And, within a few miles of it, their hearts failed them! They feared that they had lost their way and were simply wandering out into the desert to die. Back at Cooper's Creek there was, at any rate, abundance of water. They turned back —and perished! This man in Bunyan's vivid pages found the journey 'tedious,' so he turned back, became a menace and an affront to every pilgrim that he met, and laughed derisively at his earlier zeal.

*His reasoning is the reasoning of a fool.* When they spoke of the city towards which they pressed, he laughed and laughed again. 'There is no such place,' he cried, 'as that you dream of!' How did he know? He had not been to the end of the road! It was a pure assumption, the grossest guess-work! On strictly intellectual grounds, the pilgrims had far more right to laugh at him than he at them. 'The assertion that outstrips the evidence,' exclaimed Huxley, the prince of our agnostics, on a famous occasion, 'the assertion that outstrips the evidence is not only a blunder but a crime.' By that fine sentence Huxley brands Bunyan's Atheist as both a blunderer and a criminal.

*His secret is the secret of a fool.* 'I am going back,' he said, 'and will seek to refresh myself with

the things that I cast away, for that which I see is not.' It is an old story. *'We remember the fish,'* cried the children of Israel, at an advanced stage of their journey across the wilderness, *'we remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely; cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlick; but now our soul is dried away; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes.'* No melons: only miracles! It is wonderful how long the soul retains its craving for the tasty things it has forsaken. Distance lends enchantment to the view. After being fed for years on angels' food, we invest the memory of onions and garlick with a delicacy that we never discovered in them when we ate them every day. After twenty years of pilgrimage, Atheist sees a strange sweetness in the trifles that he forsook with a light heart. For the sake of the melons he says good-bye to the miracles! His hankering for the fleshpots of Egypt conquers his faith in the Promised Land. A man may easily follow his inclination and persuade himself that he follows the gleam.

III

David's fool is the *Fool Positive;* Bunyan's is the *Fool Comparative.* The *Fool Superlative* is the man who, convinced by the dictates of his reason, of his conscience, and of his heart that there is a God who made him and a Saviour who died for him, lives every day of his life as though there were neither.

# V

## BUNCH

### I

WHAT *about Bunch?* that was the question. Bunch, I need scarcely explain, was the cat. He was so called, not because of any deformity or ungainliness—he was really a very shapely and attractive cat—but because he came to us, a tiny black kitten, at the identical moment at which I was putting the finishing touches to the manuscript of *A Bunch of Everlastings.* The work lay complete upon the desk. The last 'i' had just been dotted, and the last 't' crossed, when the study door flew open, and the quiet room was swept by a tornado of boisterous excitement.

'Look what Harry Townley has given us,' they all cried in chorus, 'he's got four of them, and he says we may have this one.'

As they bounded off to show their treasure to other admirers, the mistress of the manse remained for a moment beside my desk, and glanced over the finished manuscript.

'We'll call him *Bunch,*' she said, laughingly, 'because he came to-day.' And so it was ordained.

But, at the moment of which I am about to write,

a new difficulty had arisen. We were leaving home for our annual holiday at Wedge Bay. The children had talked of nothing else for weeks past. Three more Sundays: two more Sundays: one more Sunday! Three more days: two more days: one more day! And now the appointed date had actually arrived. Everything was in a flutter of excitement. The final instructions had been given: the last dispositions had been made: the cab had been ordered. Only one question remained to be settled. What about Bunch? Bunch, sublimely unaware of the loneliness awaiting him, came purring round our feet as we moved among the dress-baskets, suitcases, and portmanteaux. What about Bunch? The younger children were for taking him; it had never occurred to them that we might heartlessly contemplate the desertion of so essential a member of the household; and there were signs of tears when our fell purpose stood exposed. Why was everybody else to go and Bunch to be left behind? A kindly neighbor, however, soothed their anguish and dismissed their fears. Mrs. Tyrrell was a little old lady who lived by herself in a cottage a few yards away.

'Bunch will be all right,' she said, assuringly. 'He often comes to my back door to see if I have anything for him. I will keep a saucer of milk always ready when he calls, and he will be as happy here as you will be at Wedge Bay. Don't worry about him!'

Thus comforted, the sunshine came back to the children's faces. The clouds returned for just a moment when, on the arrival of the cab, they bade poor Bunch an affectionate but confident good-bye. That, however, was the last of their grief. As soon as the cab turned the corner and the house was out of sight, they abandoned themselves to the thrills of the journey. The drive to the wharf and the voyage to Wedge Bay occupied all their thoughts, and, with light hearts, they resigned Bunch to the tender mercies of a next-door neighbor. Thus closes the first chapter of my narrative: I wish the second could read as pleasantly.

## II

'Here's Bunch!'

It was the day of our return, and the cab had scarcely left the door. During the holiday, Bunch had come in for frequent mention. The sight of a cat, of whatever kind or color, had led to instant speculation as to Bunch's well-being. 'I wonder how Bunch is getting on?' 'I wonder if he misses us?' 'I wonder if he'll know us when we go back?' 'I hope Mrs. Tyrrell is giving him plenty of milk!' And so on. When letters arrived from Hobart, we were immediately asked whether there was any news of Bunch. And now the holiday was a thing of the past, and we were home again! Little Mrs. Tyrrell came to her gate as soon as she heard the rattle of wheels.

'Oh, yes,' she said, smilingly, in reply to the first enquiries, 'Bunch is quite well: he was here a few minutes ago. We have grown very fond of each other, Bunch and I; and I wish that he could come and live with me always.'

The avowal was, perhaps, scarcely tactful, and the children looked as though they had scented a new danger. Had Mrs. Tyrrell used her position to win Bunch's heart away from them? Suppose Bunch didn't want to come home, but wanted to stay with Mrs. Tyrrell always and be Mrs. Tyrrell's cat! The children left Mrs. Tyrrell without any expressions of gratitude, and went bounding up the path to the garden in search of Bunch.

'Here's Bunch!' cried Stella, running excitedly towards us with the cat struggling in her arms; and, even as she spoke, it lifted a claw and inflicted on her face a scratch which extended from the forehead to the chin. She dropped him instantly, and it was clear that her pain was not solely, or even chiefly, physical. She was heart-broken to think that her former pet could treat her so savagely. We warned them to leave him alone until he had once more grown accustomed to us all; but the temptation was too strong; one by one they each ventured, and came back wincing with the smart of their scratches. After an hour or two, we carried him into the house; but his behavior there was as strange and unseemly as it had been in the garden. He tore from room to room like some wild creature. He rushed madly

up the passages, hid in dark corners, and skulked behind curtains and cupboards. He would have nothing to do with us. At the very first opportunity he bounded out at the back door and made his way straight to Mrs. Tyrrell's cottage. When I looked in on her an hour or two later to tell her about it, he was curled up on the rug at her feet, purring as innocently and contentedly as though he had no scratched children on his conscience.

We were astounded. I had heard that, under the influence of changed conditions, cats sometimes display a kind of moral deterioration. Mr. Jerome K. Jerome has a story of a cat named Thomas Henry. He came from the Reform Club, and, for years, the atmosphere of solid dignity and petrified conservatism which distinguish the Club seemed to cling to that cat. He was a most respectable cat; a most gentlemanly cat; he was a shining example to all the cats in the neighborhood. After dinner, we are told, he invariably took half-an-hour's constitutional in the square. At ten o'clock each night precisely he returned to the area door, and at eleven o'clock he was asleep in his master's easy chair. He made no friends among other cats, and took no pleasure in fighting. His existence was blameless. But, alas, conditions changed. The family went to live in the country; and in the country Thomas Henry lost all his virtuous habits and developed as many vicious ones. Mr. Jerome concludes his recital by telling of the tragedy that put an end to

Thomas Henry's life. 'Poor Thomas Henry!' he muses. 'It shows one how a reputation for respectability may lie in the mere absence of temptation. Born and bred in the atmosphere of the Reform Club, what gentleman could go wrong? I was sorry for Thomas Henry, and I have never believed in the moral influence of the country since.' In Bunch's case, however, there was no such change of environment. It was *we* who had changed our surroundings: *his* had remained practically the same. His collapse seemed inexplicable and unpardonable. The children went to bed that night—the first night after their return—with heavy hearts. To a child there is always a poignant sadness about the loss of anything; but the loss of faith is the saddest loss of all. They could have borne the smart of their scratches: but to have lost faith in Bunch!

III

Next morning a strange thing happened. I was sitting at my desk, with the window wide open beside me, when up on to the window-sill jumped Bunch! I looked at him more in sorrow than in anger: I scrutinized his bearing in the hope of detecting some evidence of penitence: but he seemed entirely oblivious of any cause of offence. He was the same old Bunch—neither savage nor sorry. It was clear that, whatever his feelings had been overnight, his attitude this morning was altogether

friendly. He sprang into the room, purred round my feet, and made every demonstration of delighted affection. I was puzzled, and, opening the door, summoned the other members of the household. They approached him cautiously, their scratches being still inflamed, but his behavior quickly banished their distrust. He received their caresses with manifest pleasure, made himself perfectly at home with them, and generally behaved as we had expected him to behave the day before. The thing was a mystery. I remembered hearing that cats are subject to strange fits and seizures: was it possible that, perhaps owing to the excitement of the children's home-coming, something of the kind had overtaken him? Glancing through the window, I saw Mrs. Tyrrell gathering some wallflowers in her garden. I called out to her.

'Good morning, Mrs. Tyrrell,' I said. 'Bunch is all right this morning, and the children are very excited about it. They are playing with him on the verandah now.'

'Not *now,*' she replied, smilingly, 'for here he is at my feet'; and she stooped and lifted him. I excused myself, and hurried to the verandah. Bunch was still the centre of attraction there. I told Mrs. Tyrrell so. She laughed, picked up the cat at her feet, and brought him round. There were the two black cats within a few feet of each other, exactly of a size, and as much alike as two peas! We all had a good laugh over it.

'I come off best,' said Mrs. Tyrrell, 'for I thought that I had grown fond of a cat that could never belong to me, and that I ought no longer to encourage about the place; and, as it turns out, I can take him back with me and have him for my very, very own. It shows that you can never go wrong by showing a little kindness to anything.'

'Yes,' replied the mistress of the manse, 'and it shows how careful we should be in our judgments. Here we all went to bed last night sad at heart because we thought that Bunch had proved fickle and faithless, and Bunch was true to us all the time. There is so often a satisfactory explanation of such things if only we have the grace to wait for it!'

Followed by her favorite, Mrs. Tyrrell returned to her wallflowers, and I went back to the study.

## IV

Bunch, I grieve to say, has gone the way of all his kind. One Sunday afternoon, at midsummer, as we sat on the lawn taking afternoon tea, it occurred to us that Bunch, lying in a shady corner, did not seem quite himself. Presently, however, he rose; took a stroll round the lawn; had a good look at each of us; and then returned to his corner, stretched himself out, and was dead! We often speak of him. Whenever the conversation turns upon events that are capable of hasty conclusions and harsh judgments, we seem to see him curled up

on the mat at our feet. The memory of him is a constant reminder that appearances are often illusive. His eyes—as we recall his familiar form—are always full of quiet rebuke. He seems to be incessantly pleading for a little patience and a larger charity.

## VI

## THE RISKY ROAD

We are born plungers. We like to speculate. We love life all the better because it is something of a lottery. The risky road is a well-worn one; it is only the safe path on which the grass is always growing. We are never so happy as when we are taking tremendous hazards. I was passing a school yesterday afternoon just as the children were pouring out of the lobbies at the end of their day's work. One boy wished to cross the road and could have done it, had he so desired, in perfect safety. But in the distance he saw a motor-car approaching at top speed. The temptation was too great. He waited on the curbstone until the car was almost opposite him, and then dashed across the road just in front of it. For a fraction of a second he must have been within a few inches of the front of the car. Another boy was walking home along the top of a narrow wall! The pavement was by no means crowded; but then, there was no chance of breaking his neck on the pavement! A few minutes later I saw a young fellow jump off a moving tram as it approached its stopping-place at the end of his street. He had to walk on to the point at which it stopped,

so that he only risked his life and limbs for the pure joy of it! In the same way I have seen boys creeping to the very edge of a precipice, clambering up the most dangerous ascents, and bathing at those spots at which the current is most treacherous. As a little lad, David Livingstone used to look longingly up at the crumbling ruins of Bothwell Castle, and was never happy until he had climbed to the highest point and carved his name on the topmost stone. But I need not multiply instances. We are all tarred with the same brush. We like to get as near as possible to the danger-zone. The man who, travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho, took 'the bloody way,' infested by robbers as he knew it to be, is the representative and father of us all. We delight in danger. And, although we sagely counsel others to take the path of safety, we love them all the better when they spurn our wisdom and stride off down the risky road.

Now of risks there are two distinct kinds. There are the risks that we run for the sake of the profit that we expect to make—a mere throwing of the sprat in the hope of catching a mackerel; and there are the risks that we run, as the schoolboys run theirs, for the sheer fun of the thing. A gambler takes risks, but he takes them calculatingly, and after carefully weighing all the chances ranged against them. A merchant takes risks, but he will not hazard a thousand pounds on the chance of gaining a thousand pence. A miner takes risks, but

he expects the jeopardy of his position to be considered in assessing the measure of his remuneration. A military leader must at times involve himself in the most appalling hazards. Some of the most brilliant and most fruitful exploits in our history have been achieved by men who did not hesitate to take stupendous risks. 'Here goes!' cried Nelson, as he committed himself to the policy that led him to Trafalgar; 'if I succeed, I shall have a statue in Westminster Abbey; if I fail, I shall be burned in effigy on every village green!' It is by the taking of such risks that fortunes are made and wars are won and empires are built. These are the risks of the first class.

But there is another class and a more attractive one. The boy who ran in front of the motor-car was not throwing a sprat to catch a mackerel. He courted the risk, as a lover courts his lady, for its own sake. Nor is this one of those boyish pranks that we discard with the advent of maturer years. A full-grown man, weighted with all the gravity of sage experience and large responsibilities, will often hazard his life in a desperate attempt to board a train that he does not need to catch. 'This morning,' said Stewart Baker, as he sat by my fireside the other night, 'this morning I set out for the city five minutes earlier than I really needed to have done. I vowed most solemnly that nothing should induce me to hurry for a tram. They run every three minutes; if I missed one, what did it matter? I

assumed a leisurely gait and walked quietly down the street. As I neared the main thoroughfare, however, I heard the rumble of the coming tram. I reminded myself of my resolve, and, for half a dozen steps, I contrived to maintain my easy pace. But the rumble grew louder; I began to run in spite of myself; there is no stopping-place at the end of our street; and, by a short dash and a clever leap, I managed to procure a precarious foothold on the moving vehicle as the wretched thing whizzed by. I have had this experience scores of times; never once have I been able calmly to miss the tram.' And Harold Fortescue tells of an old gentleman who, in hurrying to catch a train, became conscious of a severe palpitation. He consulted his doctor, who made him promise under no circumstances to hurry again. He died suddenly the next morning, close to the railway station, in running to catch the very same train! He had not the slightest need to catch it; others were following in quick succession; but the fascination of the risk was too great. Anybody who has ever spent half an hour in watching the tides of traffic surging into a city in the morning, and streaming out of it at night, must have been astonished at the risks that people will run in order to catch vehicles that they could easily afford to miss.

The passion is in our very blood. We yield to it unconsciously, involuntarily, mechanically. And no wonder! For we have been at it for thousands of

years. The greatest risks that I ever ran were those that I encountered before I was born. Every discerning pilgrim must have noticed that, of all the long road that he has had to travel, the worst and most ticklish bit was safely passed by the time that his birth became an actual fact. I am well on the way when I am born. When I reflect on all the loves and the hates, the births and the deaths, the comedies and the tragedies, that had to take place through the long agony of the ages in order to produce me, I am astounded that I did not lose my way along that difficult and tremendous stretch of the road. When I think of what might have happened if some old forbear of mine, away back in the age of the cave-men, had taken it into his head to marry the woman whom he murdered, or to murder the woman whom he married, it seems to me a perfect miracle that I got here. When I read of the barbarous ages of slaughter and carnage and brutality through which my long line of ancestors threads its fearsome way, it is perfectly astounding to me that not one of them got stabbed or clubbed or shot until they had duly taken their places in that long genealogical list. When I think of the wars and famines and pestilences through which those forbears of mine came unscathed, I catch my breath. Mark Rutherford has a striking passage in which he speaks of the temerity of a laborer who marries and has children when there is nothing but his own strength between him and ruin. 'A

million chances are encountered every day, and any one of the million accidents which might happen would cripple him or kill him. Yet he treads his path undisturbed.' But the risks that I run on *this* side of birth are nothing to the risks that I ran on *that* side of it. I seem to have at least some measure of control over *these* contingencies. I was absolutely helpless to guard against *those* calamities. So there I was, making my way for thousands of years amidst the most appalling dangers! Every day I had to take risks that might freeze the blood of the hardiest adventurer. This sort of thing generates a certain temper. The man who has spent twenty years in the wilds of Central Africa can scarcely tolerate the tameness of an English village. He longs to see an enraged elephant come bellowing out of the churchyard, or a hippopotamus standing among the alders on the banks of the trout-stream, or a lion crouching behind the elms at the corner of the green. Is it any wonder, then, that, since each of us has been journeying for countless centuries along a path beset by the most fearful perils, we feel an insatiable fondness for running risks?

Happily, we have landed on a planet that is very much to our liking. There are risks everywhere. They peep out at us from behind all the palings; they pounce down upon us from the lamp-posts, the tree-tops, and the overhanging eaves; they lurk behind the chairs, crouch under the table, and

hide beneath the bed. They swarm about us like gnats at twilight. There are risks in everything. It is risky to eat: I may be poisoned. It is risky to walk down the street: I may contract infection or meet with accident. It is risky to buy or sell or exchange: I may be defrauded or cheated or deceived. In the passage that I have just cited, Mark Rutherford declares that the laborer takes a million chances a day. Personally I have never taken the trouble to count them, but I am prepared to accept his figures as authentic.

We began early. We took a tremendous risk on the first day of our lives. Birth itself is a stupendous venture. Mr. Chesterton says that the best way in which a man could test his readiness to encounter the common variety of mankind would be to climb down a chimney into any house at random and get on as well as possible with the people inside. 'And *that,*' he adds, 'is essentially what each of us did on the day on which he was born.' Moreover, we took that terrible leap with our eyes shut. We did not pause to enquire whether the chimney that we were about to descend was the chimney of a Chinese hovel or a British palace. We plunged!

And, consciously or unconsciously, with eyes shut or eyes open, we have been plunging ever since. *Thought* is a tremendous venture, and some timid souls have shrunk from making it. Descartes, the most eminent of all French philosophers, almost frightens us out of making the attempt. 'Inasmuch

as my reason convinces me,' he says, 'that I ought to be as careful to withhold my belief from things not quite certain and indubitable as from those which I plainly believe to be false, it will be a sufficient ground to me for rejecting all my old opinions if I find in them some opening for doubt.' But let me ask our French philosopher a question. Is there not risk in caution as well as in enterprise? If I accept no view in which there is *'an opening for doubt'* shall I not be deprived of nine hundred and ninety-nine conclusions out of every thousand? There are very few matters on which, along purely intellectual lines, I can attain to absolute certainty. Matthew Arnold depicts Descartes looking out of his window at Amsterdam, seeing the public square crowded with men and women, yet saying to himself that he has no right to assume that these are really men and women; they may, after all, be mere lay figures dressed up in hats and cloaks! His famous doctrine of *'Cogito, ergo sum'* ('I think, therefore I am') convinced him that he himself *is;* but how can he be sure that these moving figures in the market place *think,* and that, therefore, they *are?* And, since he is pledged to reject any opinion in which there is *any opening for doubt,* he must tear from his mind the 'assumption that these things that he sees are men and women of warm flesh and blood, tingling with passions like unto his own!' Now here we have a brilliant mind standing where the roads fork. Each road is perilous. If he believes

these bustling creatures in the market place to be men and women, he may be the victim of an illusion; there is *'an opening for doubt.'* If, on the other hand, he rejects that conclusion, he stultifies his consciousness and leaves himself stranded, like Crusoe on his island, on a lonely universe. He himself is the only being of whose existence he can be confident. Thought is risky, of course; but, on the whole, the cautious path is just as perilous.

*Faith,* too, is a stupendous enterprise, and many hesitate to embark upon it. If I believe, I run the risk that I may believe the wrong things. But it is better to take the risk, for, if I shrink from the venture, I shall fail to believe in the right things; and I may as well believe in the false as fail to believe in the true. Indeed, experience shows that those who, fearful of taking the risk, withhold their credence from facts, finish up by yielding it to folly. In all these things, the path of safety is the path of enterprise. It is better to *think,* for the simple reason that it is better to think wrongly than not to think at all. It is better to *believe;* I can but believe wrongly; and it is better to believe wrongly than not to believe at all. It is better to believe in anything than to believe in nothing; it is better to believe in anybody than to believe in nobody.

And *Love* is the greatest venture of all. But it is best to take it. For here again the same rule applies: it is better to love those who cannot appreciate our love than never to love anyone at all. Longfellow,

in *Evangeline,* says that Love never made its venture vainly.

> Talk not of wasted affection, affection never was wasted;
> If it enrich not the heart of another, its waters, returning
> Back to their springs, like the rain, shall fill them full of refreshment;
> That which the fountain sends forth returns again to the fountain.

It is easy enough to laugh at the boy who deliberately dashes in front of the motor-car, and at his companion on the wall; but, when you are tired of laughing, it will probably occur to you that this extraordinary propensity of ours is one of the finest things about us. Nothing renders an enterprise more attractive than to show that it is extremely hazardous. Let an explorer demonstrate to the world that the expedition that he is about to lead will be dogged by death at every step, and men will flock by thousands to join his party. Who has not been stirred by reading the appeal of Pizarro to the Spaniards and the appeal of Garibaldi to the Italians? Each of these intrepid leaders secured all the followers he needed by proclaiming the terrible privations they would have to endure and the frightful risks they would have to run. And when, in our own time, Sir Ernest Shackleton proposed a tramp across the Antarctic Continent, incidentally calling in at the South Pole, he was astonished at the eagerness of men to accompany him. 'I was,' he says, 'deluged with applications. One would have thought that a march through snow and ice for more than

two thousand miles was the dizziest climax of human happiness and aspiration.' The occupants of seats in the House of Lords and the heirs to some of the proudest titles of which the British aristocracy can boast, offered to serve in the most menial capacity, if only they might be allowed to join the heroic enterprise. Naval and military officers volunteered to resign their commissions without reward or recompense of any kind if only their names might be inscribed in the coveted list of members of the polar party. The London offices of the expedition were mobbed by hundreds of stalwart young fellows eager for the great adventure; and even schoolboys exhausted their persuasive faculties in endeavoring to convince Sir Edward that they were older than their years. They would cheerfully do anything afloat or ashore if only the gallant leader would find a place for them. The blood tingles in response to a call to face life's hazards. At such a moment the soul is at its best. That is why Jesus emphasized the hardships of His service. He stamped the sign of the Cross upon everything. *'If any man will come after Me,'* He said, *'let him take up his cross and follow Me!'* He appealed to our passion for the risky road, and, as a consequence, the knightliest souls of all the ages have thronged to His banner.

## VII

## THE CUCKOO IN THE ROBINS' NEST

### I

A BOY brought up in the heart of an English county may spend his days in what part of the world he will; but he will always spend his nights in the English lanes. The Saturday excursions and holiday rambles of his boyhood will haunt his dreams as long as he lives. To an English boy, a hedgerow is a realm of enchantment. His eyes sparkle as he approaches it. He knows that he will find bright berries, toothsome nuts, sweet brier or fragrant wild-flowers; the hedge never fails to yield one or other of these. But it is not these that make his heart to beat so quickly. For in his secret soul he hopes that, in the hedge, he may come upon a snake or a hedgehog or a bird's-nest, or any one of a score of similar treasures. I can see now the glass jars in which we kept, carefully preserved in spirits, the snakes that we had captured in hedges in the lane. And as for the birds'-nests, we had cupboards crowded with them! Ever since the world began, boys have been fond of bird-nesting. One of the earliest books in the Bible instructs them as to how they should—and should not—go about it. I am

thinking this morning—I scarcely know why—of a certain public holiday—it may have been Whit-Monday—that we spent rummaging in the lane and in the woods beyond. We came home in the dusk tired out and laden with our spoil. The day's booty included a bird's-nest that puzzled us. The eggs were not all alike. One was larger than the others and its coloration was slightly different. Father, as it happened, was away from home; he never failed to read such riddles for us. We therefore resolved to take the nest to school next morning. We had among our teachers one who took an interest in such things. He always asked the result of our cricket matches; he enquired as to the way in which we had spent our holidays; he brought all sorts of curious things to school and explained them to us; indeed, he went so far as to excite among us a wild suspicion that, once upon a time, he had been a boy himself.

'Ha, ha!' he exclaimed, his face lighting up with evident interest, as we showed him the nest next morning, 'so you've come upon the cuckoo's tracks. Come and look here, boys! You can leave your desks and gather round!' The class quickly clustered about him.

'See what we have here!' he continued, enthusiastically. 'A robin's nest with six eggs in it. But the eggs do not all belong to the robins. The nest has had a visitor. A cuckoo has been here!' He picked up the egg that differed from the rest.

'The rascal!' he muttered. 'See, boys, some folks are too lazy to work for themselves, so they throw the whole burden on to other people. The cuckoo belongs to that class. It builds no nest of its own, but lays its eggs in the nests of the other birds. If this egg had been left, it would have hatched out into a young cuckoo; the robins would have had to rear it; and, before it had learned to fly, it would have pitched all the young robins out of the nest. What do you think of that?'

I forget what we thought. I am afraid our judgment was a harsh one. But, like most such judgments, it has been softened and moderated with the passage of the years.

II

The years bring wondrous transformations. Of those great lonely woods in which I found the robin's nest, not a tree is left. The hill-side is crowded with cottages. The old lane is a busy thoroughfare. And the school is not the same place. And, whilst these changes have been in progress, my mind has also changed. I think more kindly of the cuckoo. For, since I found the nest in the woods, I have sat at the feet of the great naturalists. And my later teachers —Darwin and Jefferies particularly—have taught me charity.

The Mohammedans say that the cuckoo is the only bird that we shall find in Heaven. I do not go so far as that; but Charles Darwin and Richard Jef-

feries have shown me that the cuckoo is confronted by difficulties that are almost insuperable. If we only took the trouble to go more carefully into the matter, we should probably find that most of the people whose conduct we condemn are beset by temptations and perplexities of which we ourselves know little or nothing. If we were placed as they are placed we should probably do no better than they are doing.

Darwin points out that the cuckoo is seriously embarrassed in two ways. To begin with, she is a bird of passage, and her migratory instinct makes her course extremely difficult. Her stay in England is a brief one. But, on the other hand, her method of rearing a family is singularly protracted. For, instead of laying her eggs at short intervals, as do the other birds, she only lays one or two eggs a week. An unconscionable period therefore intervenes between the laying of the first egg and the laying of the last. As Darwin points out, 'if the cuckoo were to make her own nest, and sit on her own eggs, those first laid would have to be left for some time unincubated or there would be eggs and young birds of different ages in the same nest.' And that would never do. The older and sturdier fledgelings would devour all the available food and would either eject the younger members of the family from the nest or leave them to starve in it. And, in any case, the raising of the family would be a painfully tardy and protracted business. But the cuckoo cannot

afford to spend so much time over rearing her young. The time for migration would probably find her with her fledgelings still on her hands. Even the swallow, subjected to no such difficulties, is sometimes caught in that way. The time for her overseas flight arrives whilst her babies are still under her care. Screaming in anguish as she flies round the nest that she must desert, she takes an agonizing farewell of the brood that must miserably perish as soon as she leaves it. If this tragedy sometimes overtakes the swallow, it would very frequently befall the cuckoo with her slower ways. She therefore guards against it by confiding her offspring to the care of birds who will be able to nourish her fledgelings after she herself has flown.

So much for the *Origin of Species!* Now for *Field and Hedgerow!* Richard Jefferies, who knew the cuckoo intimately, states the case from quite another standpoint. He declares that, if the cuckoo built a nest of her own, and laid her five eggs in it, she and her mate would never be able to cope with the insatiable demands of her brood. We have no idea, he says, of the enormous quantities of food that a young cuckoo needs for its support. Its incredible voracity—swallow, swallow, swallow; gape, gape, gape—is positively astounding. The two robins or the pair of hedge-sparrows in whose nest the young cuckoo is bred, work the whole day through and cannot satisfy him. It is really distressing to see their unrewarded toil. The mother-

cuckoo comes at times to help them; but even then the young bird never has enough. 'How, then,' Jefferies asks, 'could the cuckoo feed two or three of its offspring and itself at the same time? Does anybody imagine that the cuckoo could herself feed even *two* young cuckoos? Three would wear her out completely. And if there were *five* young cukoos in the nest, it would take all the birds in the hedge to satisfy them.' Jefferies goes on to say that, by setting a whole army of foster-parents to work to hunt and forage on behalf of its own hungry young, the cuckoo causes an immense destruction of pestiferous insects and is, therefore, one of the most welcome and most valuable of English birds.

The case, I am aware, is not complete. I am not claiming an acquittal. Much less am I asking that the cuckoo should be exalted to a pedestal as a paragon of virtue. He does not leave the court without a stain upon his character. Even after hearing all that my two illustrious witnesses have urged in his defence, we feel sad as we walk through the woods and mark the havoc that the cuckoo has wrought. We see the dead fledgelings strewn on the ground under the nests of the robins and the wrens; and we feel that the cuckoo has a good deal to answer for. I have simply tried to show that there are extenuating circumstances. I feel that if I were in the cuckoo's place, I should manage the business of living no better than he does. And if, instead of spending so much time and thought upon the cuckoo,

I had investigated the cases of all the other accused and convicted creatures around me, I should probably have concluded the enquiry with a very similar feeling.

III

In another of his books—*Wild Life in a Southern County*—Richard Jefferies raises another curious question in relation to the cuckoo; and his answer to that question confirms the conclusion that I have already reached. The cuckoo, as everybody knows, lays her egg in the robin's nest. But then, why do the robins continue to feed and tend the ungainly intruder long after they have discovered the alien nature of their strange fledgeling? That is the question; and to that question Jefferies returns a most significant and suggestive answer. The robins are under no illusion as to the character of the uncomely stranger. A robin's powers of observation are far too sharp for that. Why, a robin, perched up there in the loftier branches of the elm tree, can pretend to be looking at you as you pass along the bridle-path through the woods, and, all the while, he is carefully observing the movement of an ant or a caterpillar crawling through the grass twenty or thirty feet below him! It is monstrous, therefore, to suppose that such wide-awake eyes are deceived as to the nature of the cuckoo. The cuckoo differs in plumage. More important still, it differs in size; before it leaves the nest it is bigger than its two

foster-parents put together. And, most important of all, it differs in general appearance. It daily grows in likeness to the hawk, a bird of which all robins stand in mortal dread. Moreover, the cuckoo, as it grows, pushes the young robins out of the nest, and the poor little things lie dead on the grass below. Yet, as long as it needs feeding, the parent robins go on feeding it. Why? Jeffries has no doubt as to the reason. They feed it at first, he says, out of pity for its helplessness. Strange as it looks, they themselves hatched it, and they cannot let it perish. And they feed it later on because, by that time, they have become familiar with it, and have even grown fond of it. Their hourly ministry to its need has awakened their affection. As a woman will become devotedly attached to a foundling babe committed to her care, so these robins gradually learn to love their queer protégé. Love is proverbially blind to the ugliness of the object loved. The wrens, the finches, and the sparrows, flying by, marvel at the hideous creature in the robins' nest. Some of the more timid, settling in the branches near by, mistake it for a hawk—the resemblance is very close—and fly away screaming in terror. But the robins themselves have cared for the cuckoo from the first, and, little by little, they have come to love it.

Love is largely a matter of time. The most repulsive creature in all the world is all the world to somebody. Somebody has had the patience to get

to know him. Somebody—robin-like—has daily ministered to his need. And, in spite of everything, somebody has found him lovable. Nero is the most villainous figure in the entire pageant of Roman history. Yet, after his death, a woman came from time to time and reverently strewed flowers upon his tomb. It is possible, of course, that she knew less about Nero than some people. It is at least equally possible that she knew *more!*

We do not love places because they are so beautiful. We love them because, like the cuckoo in the robin's nest, they have grown into our lives. They have become part of us. Familiarity has bred fondness. I really believe that you can fall in love with anything—even with life itself—if, like the robins, you take time over it. Yes, even with life itself. I am writing on the thirty-first of December. The New Year is knocking at the door. At such times we indulge in fond wishes, in sweet anticipations, in daring flights of fancy, in noble resolutions, and in renewing our loftiest ideals. We send out cards. But among those who receive these well-meant greetings, there are some with whom life has dealt very harshly. The past is dark and the future is drab. Our dainty greetings awaken within them a spice of cynicism. The New Year has no attraction for them. They are convinced that the pretty phrases on the New Year cards will prove illusory, deceptive, phantasmal. I have been led into this train of thought by a talk I have just had with Arthur Nor-

ton. Arthur was opening the New Year greetings that the postman had just brought him, and, as he read the delicate sentiments inscribed upon the cards, I detected a distinct curl of the lip. The past few years have dealt rather roughly with him, and he is in danger of being soured. He has no confidence in the New Year. He looks upon life as the wrens and the finches and the sparrows look upon the cuckoo in the robin's nest. He has not learned the secret of the robins. It does not occur to him that it is possible to fall in love with the thing that so affrights him.

But it is. Robinson Crusoe learned that. When he discovered the footprint on his island, he rushed, panic-stricken, to his hut, and spent one dreadful night in a paroxysm of ungovernable terror. Yet, in the issue, that footprint brought into his life his man Friday, the dearest and most faithful friend he ever had! 'Wherefore,' says he, 'it may not be amiss for all people who shall read my story to make this just observation from it. For how frequently, in the course of our lives, the evil which in itself we seek most to shun, and which, when we are fallen into, is the most dreadful to us, is oftentimes the very means or door of our deliverance, by which alone we can be raised again from the affliction that has overtaken us.' It is the old story of the robins becoming enamored of the cuckoo.

Arthur Norton is young. The cynic is always young. If he takes my advice he will get into touch

with a few elderly people. Grey hairs are invariably witnesses to a cheerier view of life. Why, unless this be so, are old people so fond of talking of the good old times? Why is age proverbially garrulous and reminiscent? It is because the robin has fallen in love with the cuckoo. However much our grandfathers and grandmothers may have feared and distrusted life as they looked forward to its stress and struggle, they have lived with it long enough to fall in love with it, and they cannot imagine that we in our turn are likely to enjoy as great a time as they have had. Ask any proud pair on their silver wedding day—or, better still, on their golden wedding day—whether the rainbow-tinted hopes of their marriage morning have been realized, and see what they will say! They will say that the fulfilment has been lovelier than the promise. The truth has been fairer than the dream. They looked for glitter and they found pure gold.

And so, on thinking it over, I discover that the ultimate tenderness of the robins for the cuckoo in their nest is in keeping with the experience of the universe. Things have an amiable way of growing upon us. Life, like the intruding cuckoo, may look uncomely enough to some eyes and from some angles; but you will never get those who, like the robins, have treated it with a little patience and a little kindness to say a word against it.

# VIII

## THE EMPTY CRIB

### I

It was on the lawn in front of the Silverstream Manse that I lost my faith in the unimpeachable excellence of cleanliness. Cleanliness is a good thing; but, like most good things, it can be overdone.

We were lounging under the shade of a giant elm—Sidwell, Clive Hislop, John Broadbanks and I. We had survived, without much trouble, the tedium of a committee meeting, for, on this occasion, the dreariness of resolutions and amendments had been tempered to us by the idyllic conditions under which we met. To keep in line with tradition, the meeting should have been held in a dingy classroom in the city; but John Broadbanks, who had a genius for making drudgery delightful, upset the usual procedure.

'There are only four of us on the committee,' he wrote to the secretary. 'Why should we all go to town to bore each other to death in a stuffy old classroom? Come out to Silverstream; we can have the meeting on the lawn; you can bring your pipes; and we'll have some afternoon tea to keep us from falling asleep over the business.'

It was so arranged. We quickly reached the end of the agenda, and John slipped off to arrange for the afternoon tea. On his return to the group, he was attended by little Don. Don had an exercise-book in his hand and wanted his father to set him a copy. Taking his fountain-pen from his vest-pocket, John wrote across the top of the page, in his best copper-plate, the words: *Cleanliness is next to Godliness.* And Don, advised by his mother to get such irksome tasks out of the way as quickly as possible, scampered off to copy it at once.

'That's wholesome doctrine for a growing boy!' remarked Hislop, smilingly, as he watched Don's retreating form.

'Oh, yes,' laughed John, 'it's a proverb; and, somehow, proverbs seem made to be inscribed on the pages of copy-books. But, like most proverbs, it's more epigrammatic than true. It's good as far as it goes; but the trouble is, it doesn't go far. The Bible itself warns us, you know, against making a fetish of cleanliness. But, I say!' he exclaimed, with sudden enthusiasm, 'if you fellows have not yet chosen your texts for Sunday, I can recommend that one: *Where no oxen are the crib is clean.* That's the other side of the proverb that I wrote in Don's copy-book. And it's a very important side, too!'

But, at that moment, he was interrupted by the arrival of his wife with the afternoon tea.

'Sermonizing again!' exclaimed Lilian, turning

playfully upon him. 'Do you think these ministers want you to talk texts to them all the afternoon?'

'Indeed, it was a very good text that I was giving them,' replied John, in self-defence. 'It was the text that I often quote to you, my lady, when you scold me about the untidiness of my study. As I often impress upon you,' he said, taking the cups from her tray in order to hand them to us, 'it would be very easy to keep the study tidy if I never went into it. *Where no oxen are the crib is clean.* They're all going to preach on that text next Sunday: I can see the light of an inspiration coming into Sidwell's face. They'll have a great sermon on *The Empty Crib* at Balclutha on Sunday; you mark my words!'

The subject passed with the tinkle of the teacups; and I thought no more about it for many a long day.

II

That committee-meeting on the Silverstream lawn took place more than twenty years ago; but a couple of experiences that fell to my lot on Tuesday brought it back with singular vividness to my memory. In the afternoon I was visiting at the home of Tom and Elsie Reed. Tom and Elsie are young people to whom I am very much attached. I married them some years ago: they are devoted members of the church: and they have three bonnie little children. Elsie's mother lives with them. Mrs.

Brown is very old and infirm; and it was to her, primarily, that my visit was directed. She is too feeble to come to church, and I like to look in when it is at all possible. Whilst I was chatting with her, Jack, the eldest of her grandchildren, came in from school, and, seeing me, came and stood beside the old lady's chair. He listened for a moment to our conversation and then started a new theme on his own account.

'Oh, Granny,' he cried, 'you'd get into dreadful trouble if you came to school. Teacher says she's going to examine all our hands every morning; and, unless they're as white as white can be, we shall be kept in. Just look at yours!' This brought Elsie to the rescue.

'Ah, but, Jack,' reasoned his mother, 'teacher was only speaking of little boys and girls who have never done any hard work. It's quite right for you and Lena and Daisy to have white hands. But when you get older you'll understand that white hands are not the only nice ones.' She perched herself on the arm of her mother's chair and took one of the wrinkled hands in hers. 'Granny's hand,' she said, stroking it, 'is stained and soiled through working hard all her life for me and for all your aunties and uncles. These hands can never be white now, but *we* think they're lovely.'

Jack sauntered off to think about it; and I, too, shortly afterwards took my departure. It was raining in torrents, but, all the way home, my mind

was back at Silverstream. I thought of John's playful remarks about his study. 'It would be easy to keep the study tidy if I never went into it!' I thought of Elsie's remarks about her mother's hands. 'It would be easy to keep your hands white if you never did any work!' And then there came flashing into my mind the text on which John had urged us to preach: *Where no oxen are the crib is clean.* It is strange that I have been so long in taking his advice.

The weather got worse rather than better. It was a dreadful night, with a wind that shook the house and a rain that lashed wildly at the windows. I was glad that I had no engagement. After tea I sought the society of cosy slippers, a roaring fire, a luxurious arm-chair, and a delightful book. The book was the *Reminiscences of Sir Henry Hawkins.* Two pictures soon impressed themselves on my imagination. I saw Sir Henry Hawkins at the climax of his career, the most popular and most powerful advocate of his time. He is waited upon by an army of clerks: he moves amidst a whirl of papers: he is amassing an enormous fortune. His success is phenomenal. But it was not always like this. He himself described the inauguration of his career. He was entered at the Middle Temple on April 16, 1839. He took, as his office, a little room at 3 Elm Court: it was approached by five flights of stairs. From the window he could see nothing but a forest of chimney-pots, and having nothing else

to do, he spent a good deal of his time surveying them.

'The room,' he says, 'was cheap and lonely, dull and miserable—a melancholy altitude, beyond the world and its companionship. Had I been of a despairing disposition, I might have gone mad, for hope surely never came to a fifth floor. But there I sat day by day, week by week, and month by month, waiting for the knock that never came, hoping for the business that might never come.' Hundreds of times a day he listened feverishly to the steps on the stairs below. Most of them only came up one flight: a fair number came up two: some even climbed the third: on rare occasions some bold adventurer ascended with asthmatical energy the fourth: but the *fifth!* 'The fifth landing was too remote for the postman, for I never got a letter; and no squirrel watching from the topmost bough of the tallest pine could be more lonely than I!' This was in 1839.

Look round the rooms in 1859! There are piles of papers everywhere: messengers rush in and out: the waiting-room is thronged with clients and witnesses: attorneys pass to and fro: clerks fly hither and thither: everything seems in a whirl and a flurry!

Go back twenty years and glance once more at that little upstairs chamber at Elm Court! There is a virgin sheet of blotting-paper on the desk: the pigeon-holes are empty: the pen-nibs glitter in their immaculate cleanliness: the stationery is arranged

in faultless regularity: the law-books are in perfect sequence and condition on the shelves. Nothing is soiled: nothing is disorderly: nothing is out of place.

Under the genial influence of my fire, I allowed the book to sink to my lap: I closed my eyes: I surveyed these two pictures side by side. The cleanliness of 1839! The confusion of 1859! And then —my comfortable conditions asserting themselves more unmistakably—my mind wandered. It wandered back to the events of my afternoon call: it journeyed on across the years to the committee-meeting on the lawn at Silverstream: it took hold once more of the text that John quoted that day with such effect. *Where no oxen are the crib is clean.* The unused study is easily kept tidy. The hands that are never soiled by domestic ministries can easily be preserved in milky whiteness. The upstairs office to which no client ever comes can easily be kept free from flurry and confusion. The stall into which no cattle are ever led is easily kept from litter and defilement.

III

*Cleanliness is next to Godliness,* says the proverb that John Broadbanks inscribed so boldly in his boy's copy-book. It sometimes is. And sometimes, on the contrary, it is as far from godliness as pole is from pole. Cleanliness is often a blessing; but it is often a curse. In the fourth chapter of his ter-

rible prophecy, Amos tells of the horrors that the Most High has sent upon his reprobate people in hope of leading them to repentance. *'I have sent unto you war and pestilence and famine, yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the Lord. And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your houses, yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the Lord.'*

*Cleanness of teeth!* The cleanliness that is not a blessing but a curse, and a curse most terrible! I know a man whose ledger is spotlessly clean: his business is a failure! I know a woman whose nursery is hushed and neat: her child is dead! I know a carpenter on whose workshop floor there is no litter of shavings: he has taken to drink, and never goes near his bench! In each case it is because there are no oxen that the crib is clean. The cleanliness is the cleanliness of stagnation; the cleanliness of inactivity; the cleanliness of death.

Like everything else, cleanliness may be purchased at too high a price. The grocer cannot afford the clean ledger: the barrister cannot afford a tidy office: the farmer cannot afford the clean but empty stall. Herein lies the weakness of monasticism. I may prevent the dust and defilement of the world from settling on my soul by imprisoning myself in a cloister. But, separated from the world, I can no longer serve the world. I have stultified and disqualified myself. I have rendered it impossible for me to do the work that I was sent into the world to

do. It is better for me to enter into the hurly-burly and to do my work, even though my soul gets somewhat dusty in the doing of it. By entering a convent a woman may render indelible the virgin sweetness of her chastity. But it is the hand that rocks the cradle that rules the world. There hangs before me as I write a picture entitled *More Heavens than One*. I fell in love with it as it stood in a picture-dealer's window many years ago, and bore it home with singular exultation. It represents a nun passing the open door of a workman's cottage. The wife—a young woman of simple beauty and homely charm—has prepared the evening meal in readiness for her husband's arrival. As she waits his coming she plays with a curly-headed little toddler perched on the edge of the table, whilst a baby slumbers serenely in the cradle at her feet. Her knitting is lying close at hand, and the evidences of her womanly touch are everywhere. The nun, glancing in at the door, feels that her cloistral life has saved her from an infinity of toil and moil; but has she paid too high a price for that immunity? *That* is the question skilfully expressed in her countenance. Has she bought the cleanness of the stall by sacrificing the oxen? There are, she feels, more heavens than one, and she is by no means sure that *her* heaven is the heavenliest.

IV

The empty crib saves the farmer a lot of trouble;

but, on the whole, it would be better for him if it were occupied by oxen and needed constant cleansing and attention. He has a clean crib, it is true; but, on the other hand, he has no oxen with which to plough, and his farm must go to rack and ruin. The same principle holds true of the easy conscience and the complacent soul. Where no oxen are the crib is clean, and, where no illumination is, the conscience is clean also. An uninstructed conscience may be coaxed into approving of any enormity. Every crime in the calendar has at some time or other been committed by a man whose conscience applauded the deed.

The atmosphere of the dining-room looks perfectly free of dust until a shaft of light suddenly shines across it, and then, in that luminous line, a million specks are seen to be dancing. It is a parable. When there was no divine work going forward in the heart of Job, he talked all day long of his integrity and charity; but, when a spiritual illumination broke upon him, he abhorred himself and repented in dust and ashes. Before Paul caught the vision on the road to Damascus, his soul was like an empty crib. Nothing was going on there. And, as a consequence, he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, proud and perfectly content. But when there began in his soul that wondrous work that transfigured him and, through him, shook the world, he cried out of the bitterness of his spirit that of sinners he was chief.

Let every minister be thankful that his study

needs tidying: let every barrister be thankful for the bustle and confusion of his office: let every carpenter be thankful for the heap of shavings on the floor: let every mother be thankful for the tumult in the nursery: let every farmer be thankful for the crib that needs cleaning out! It shows that there is something doing. In exactly the same way, let every man be thankful when his conscience cries out against him: the evil day is the day on which conscience resolves to speak no more. And, above all, let every man be thankful at having discovered the defilement and contamination of his own soul. As with the defilement in the farmer's stall, it is a sign of life. We have all heard of the visitor who, inspecting a little country cemetery, pitied the ill-health of the grave-digger. 'You've a terrible cough;' he said. 'Umph,' retorted the old man; 'but *there's plenty here*'—pointing to the tombs—*'would be very glad o' my cough!'* That is so. The cough is a sign of life; but, for all that, the cough must be cured or it will drag the old man down to his grave. The sight of the dirty crib is a healthy sight, but it is at the same time a call for cleansing. The torments of an aroused conscience and the recognition of inward pollution are symptoms of spiritual vitality for which a wise man will give thanks on bended knees; but they are useless and worse than useless unless they drive him, in his desperation, to the fountain opened for all sin and for all uncleanness.

# PART III

# I

## 'WHAT'S MONEY?'

*'Papa! what's money?'*

That was the abrupt question with which frail little Paul Dombey startled his poor father on a certain very memorable day in the familiar history of that famous family.

*'What's money?'* It is wonderful how adroitly a child probes to the very heart of things. Everybody who has read Charles Dickens's clever story knows how awkwardly the great financier fenced and floundered in his attempt to frame a satisfactory reply.

'What is money, Paul! Money? *Money?'*

Mr. Dombey did not seem to know. That is the trouble; nobody seems to know. And most certainly the Churches do not seem to know. Money is the dominating factor in the busy world outside the Churches; and the Churches have no doctrine on the subject! *What is money?* asks Paul Dombey of his father. And his puzzled father turns to the Churches in his despair. *'What is money?'*— Mr. Dombey wants to know. And his question puzzles the Churches, just as much as little Paul's question puzzled him. *What is money?* Is it good

or is it bad? Is it cruel or is it kind? It is time that we made up our minds. Mr. Dombey cannot enlighten the mind of little Paul until the Churches have answered the question that he has a perfect right to ask. The Churches too often speak of money as though it is a very good thing when it comes to church; but a very doubtful quantity anywhere else. But that will never do. We are not prepared to admit that *men* are good men when they come to church if we know them to be *bad* men everywhere else. Why, then, should we treat *men* on one principle and *money* on another?

I have just been on a visit to one of the more remote districts of this great Australian continent. On Wednesday I had to motor eighty miles through desert and bush to the nearest railway station. When I settled down in the train it occurred to me that I had brought nothing to read. Glancing round the compartment I noticed on the hat-rail a crumpled newspaper. It was published in a little up-country town that I had never seen, and was several days old. I soon became absorbed in a detailed report of a church anniversary. The names were all strange to me: but I was interested in the description of the decorations, the music, and the speeches. Especially the speeches. And then, after luxuriating in a cleverly written epitome of a most suggestive and inspiring deliverance, I came suddenly upon one or two sentences that set me thinking. 'The collection was then taken,' says the report. 'The chink

of the money seemed quite out of harmony with such a spiritual and forcible address as that which had just been delivered. Two octaves would not represent the declivity from the speech to the collection.' Now what is this curiosity that we have discovered in this crumpled newspaper? If money is good—if it is even temporarily good during its presence in church—why should the chink of the money seem such a discord at the close of an intensely spiritual oration? The address was at best a matter of *speech;* whilst the collection represents a certain amount of *sacrifice.* Is not sacrifice as spiritual as speech? The answer is so obvious that we need not wait for it. Then why, to the writer of this report, was there something jarring and discordant about the chink of the coin? The fact is that the writer of the report must be credited with a logical faculty. He felt, as I feel, that we are hopelessly illogical in assuming that a sovereign is a sinner in the street and a saint in the sanctuary. It is either good or bad everywhere: it is a saint or a sinner all the time. The reporter harshly assumes that it is a *sinner* everywhere, and, therefore, out of place in church. I, on the other hand, am prepared to argue that it is a *saint* everywhere, and, therefore, to be revered even in the market-place. Between the earnest tone of the preacher and the chink of coin I detect no discord whatsoever.

'Speaking o' money,' said the night-watchman in Mr. W. W. Jacobs' *Light Freights,* as he selected

an empty soap box on the wharf for a seat, 'speaking o' money, the whole world would be different if we all 'ad more of it. It would be a brighter and a 'appier place for everybody!' I am inclined, on the whole, to agree with the philosophical night-watchman. But how could I agree with him unless I believed that money is a good thing; good *in itself* apart from all the accidents of time and place; good in the dainty purse of a millionaire or in the dusty pocket of a laborer; good in the crowded street and good in the quiet sanctuary; good always and everywhere? 'The whole world would be different if we all 'ad more of it!' says the night-watchman; and several instances rush to mind to vindicate the sweeping proposition. What about Wordsworth? Wordsworth never rose to real sublimity until he was liberated from the stress of financial anxiety. And what about Wordsworth's successor—what about Lord Tennyson? Everybody who is familiar with the biography will recall that long and barren period in the poet's life during which the muse was stifled by poverty. And what about Robert Louis Stevenson? The dread of poverty haunted the soul of Stevenson like a nightmare. 'It is dibs that are wanted,' he writes to Henley, at the beginning of his career; and, at the end, it was still the same. 'Poor Stevenson ought never to have had to think of money,' says Miss Masson, in her monograph, 'yet he had to worry about it all his life.' If Robert Louis Stevenson had been freed from all such cares,

we might have had several more books of the stamp of *Treasure Island;* and if Nathaniel Hawthorne had been saved from his worry about money, we might have had a succession of novels as powerful as *The Scarlet Letter.* There are, I know, instances of men and women who have done in poverty what they could not possibly have done in wealth, just as there are instances of men and women who have done in sickness what they could not possibly have done in health. But that, of course, proves nothing. Health is a good thing; and money is a good thing; and the night-watchman's contention is almost axiomatic.

*'Your money or your life!'* cries the highwayman. 'Life is sweet!' thinks his victim. But money is sweet, too: and the man who speaks contemptuously of money is not to be trusted. When he was robbed on the high-road, Mr. Little Faith only lost his spending-money, Bunyan tells us; but Bunyan was sincere enough and human enough to show that the theft of his pocket-money was a very bitter loss to the poor pilgrim. 'He was forced to beg as he went to keep himself alive; but beg and do what he could, he still went hungry most of the way.' The loss of money is often a terribly tragic one. 'I have never known,' says Joseph Brierley, in one of his fine essays, 'I have never known any grief that ended life very quickly, except this single grief of sudden and unexpected pecuniary ruin. Failures like those of the City of Glasgow Bank and the Liberator

Society, led in many cases to death or madness. Even when there was fortitude enough to go on with life, the life was often permanently shadowed and embittered. It is so very hard to go on for years and years accumulating by strict frugality a provision for one's self and one's own family circle, and see it all swept away in a moment by the deceit of the men we have trusted. *Young* men can renew the battle; so can *middle-aged* men, though they see very well that it means that they must struggle to the very end, and that that end is nearer than it would otherwise have been. But when one is *old* and weary, and cannot hope to do much in making the loss good, and is condemned to witness, hour after hour and day by day, the privations which he had toiled so hard to avert from him and his, the bitterness seems incurable; the loss is without recovery; the life is dashed to pieces.' When the highwayman cries 'Your money or your life!' he forgets that a man's money *is* his life; it is simply the mechanism by which we store up the superfluous vigor of youth to sustain us amidst the frailties of age. It is all very fine for shallow pulpiteers to deride the worth of gold; but, if time and space permitted, I would be prepared to prove that half the pathos and half the tragedy and half the heroism of the planet is wrapped up in money bags. Some of the bravest fights that have ever been fought have been the conflicts of noble souls against impending ruin; and some of the greatest heart-breaks that have

ever occurred have been connected with the loss of fortune. Yes, life is very sweet, but money is scarcely less so; and when the highwayman shouts 'Your money or your life!' the surrender in either case must be very bitter.

Yet we must be careful. One of the finest things ever said about money fell from the lips of David Elginbrod. Everybody loved and reverenced David: he is the most satisfying of all George Macdonald's heroes. He looked like a giant; he seemed to have come of some huge antediluvian breed; yet nobody was more gentle, more refined, more lovable than he. He was only a servant; he lived in a poor little cottage; yet everybody, from the laird to the ploughboys, implicitly obeyed him. He ruled the estate like a king. He was a philosopher, too. On the particular occasion of which I am now thinking he is comforting the poor young tutor, Hugh Sutherland, who has been grievously affronted by the violent behavior of the laird's wife. David urges Hugh to bear with her.

'Ye see,' he says, 'she hasna had fair play. She doesna come o' a guid breed.'

Hugh is astonished, and says so. 'I thought,' he exclaims, 'that she brought the laird a good property.'

'Ow, aye,' David replies, 'she brocht him lots o' siller; but hoo was't gotten? The mistress's father made his siller in creepin', crafty ways. He was a bit merchan' in Aberdeen; an' aye keepit his thumb weel ahint the end of his measure, sae 'at he made

an inch on ilka yard he sauld. Sae *he took frae his soul and pit it into his siller-bag!'*

William Law has three noble chapters on *The Wise and Pious Use of our Estates;* but he has nothing more incisive and searching than that remark of David Elginbrod's *'He took from his soul and put it into his siller-bag.'*

Gold can be degraded, of course; but the very fact that it can be degraded shows that there is something good about it. The cynic says that money dominates everything. 'Most things are done for money,' he says, 'and, in return for money, almost anything is to be had.' But the cynic, as usual, goes too far. If he were right in saying that everything is done for money, then it would follow that to money we owe everything. And, much as I esteem the moral value of money, I am not prepared to go as far as that. It is true that, lured by the prospect of gold, we all do things that otherwise we should have left undone. Money calls out our capacities; it makes us pull ourselves together; it compels us to do our best. But, when the cynic implies that money can effect *anything,* he is clearly mistaken. The limitations of money are much more striking than its achievements. Even Paul Dombey, in whose company we set out, noticed that.

'What can money do?' asked the little invalid.

'Do, Paul?' replied his father, 'money can do anything.'

'Then why didn't money save my mamma?' asked

Paul, thinking of the sad and silent grave in the churchyard.

To be sure. The child's question struck the financier's faith as the torpedo of a submarine strikes a huge ocean liner. It heeled over and perished instantly. Tell me one thing that can be got for money, and I will tell you fifty that cannot. Mr. Chesterton says that the things which men can be *bribed* into doing are comparatively few. 'No man,' he says, 'would, at a society dinner, drink out of a soup tureen for money. He would not wear his coattails in front for money. And he would not for money spread a report that he had softening of the brain.' Kingsley, too, in the *Water Babies,* says that the barnacles on a lobster's claws are considered a great mark of distinction in lobsterdom, 'and no more to be bought for money than a good conscience or the Victoria Cross!'

'Oh, money, money, money!' cried poor Charles Lamb passionately, 'how blindly hast thou been worshipped and how stupidly abused! Thou art health and liberty and strength; and *he that hath thee may rattle his pockets at the devil!*' 'Twas well and bravely spoken! At last, at last we have discovered sense and spirituality in the same breath! A sovereign is a saint, and not a sinner, after all! As with every genuine saint, you must neither worship nor abuse him. *'He that hath thee can rattle his pockets at the devil!'* How can there be anything discordant in the chink of the collection after this?

The fact is that money provides the one opportunity that most of us have of doing a little good before we die. I learned that bit of profound wisdom from old Davie Glendenning. Davie was one of the most obscure members of the Mosgiel church; but he was the truest philosopher on the subject of finance that I have ever met. He was only a mill-hand, it is true, but his name is very great in the kingdom of God. He has gone now; so that I am violating no confidence. He was no scholar, and I used to help him with his correspondence. The thing that astonished me was its magnitude and its character. There were letters from Dr. Barnardo's Homes, from Missionary Societies, from Hospital Boards, and from charitable institutions of all kinds. One day I asked him what it all meant.

'Weel,' he said, 'sit ye doon, an' I'll tell ye. I aye feel that I maun dae my bittie every week for the puir wee bairnies that hae neither faither nor mither. But I cud na' tak' a bairnie into this bit hame, ye ken! An' then, ye mind what the Maister said aboot gaein' an' preachin' the gospel to a' the world; but hoo cud Davie gae? And hoo cud Davie preach? And it makes my heart sore, ye ken, to think o' the puir things that are sick or in pain; but hoo can Davie nurse and tend them? Sae *this* is what I do. The first 'oor in the mill every day I ca' the Lord's 'oor. On *Monday,* frae echt till nine, I says to mysel', "Davie, lad, dae a guid bit o' 'onest wark noo for the wee bairnies without faithers

or mithers." And on *Tuesday* I says to mysel', "Now, Davie, lad, ye're gaen' to dae an 'oor's guid wark for India the day!" And on *Wednesday* I says to mysel', says I, "Davie, my mon, noo dae the vera best ye can frae echt till nine for the puir folk in their pain." ' And so on. On pay-day he put the wages of those sacred hours into little boxes that he had made on purpose. Once a quarter he had a glorious time in sending off his gifts. And Davie thought money just the loveliest contrivance that was ever invented. Davie would have said that a sovereign was a saint every time.

## II

## EMPTY PITCHERS

### I

It was a Saturday morning. A farmer, calling at the manse with eggs, told me that John Broadbanks had been ill. In the afternoon, therefore, I set out for Silverstream; and, to my delight, found John sunning himself on the broad verandah.

'Yes,' he said, with a brave attempt at a laugh, 'I've had a bad time; but that's past. The thing that's worrying me now is the future.' I bade him be more precise.

'Well,' he explained, 'to-morrow's our Sunday School anniversary; and I haven't an idea in my head suited to such an occasion.'

We soon agreed that he was to drive over to Mosgiel and preach a couple of his old sermons—sermons that the Mosgiel folk always enjoyed—whilst I remained at Silverstream and conducted the anniversary. He set out almost at once in order to complete the journey before sunset.

When I entered into the new arrangement it was my intention, too, to preach old sermons. We had recently celebrated the anniversary of our Sunday School at Mosgiel, and the addresses that I had

delivered on that occasion were fresh in my mind. But it was otherwise ordered. During that Saturday evening I had John's study to myself. I sat in his arm-chair beside a noble fire, and casually picked up his study Bible. And what was this? In a trice I seemed to be admiring a series of pictures which passed before my fancy with realistic and cinematographic effect. For this is the text that greeted me: *'Their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters; they came to the wells, and found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads.'* How fond children are of pictures! 'On the morrow,' I said to myself, 'I will display these! It will save me a sermon, and they will like it very much better!'

II

And here, to begin with, is a *Picture of Merriment!* Does no one else see them, these laughing children, with their sparkling eyes and roguish faces, trooping off with their pitchers to the waters? I can distinctly hear their silvery peals of merriment, and see their graceful antics, as they rush pell-mell to the distant wells. If it were a *sermon* that I had to preach, I suppose I should make the scene to turn round three key-words: 1. *Authority.*—Were they not sent by their parents, the nobles? 2. *Expectancy.*—Were they not going to the wells? 3. *Capacity.*—Had they not their pitchers in their hands?

But it is *not* a sermon. It is a picture—a picture of a wild, childish rush from the home to the wells. And the only object in the picture that lends it seriousness is the pitcher that each child carries in his hand. And that empty pitcher is well worth a second glance. The wonderful capacity of a child! Macaulay enlarges upon it in his essay on *Milton;* Wordsworth translates it into poetry in his *Ode on Immortality;* George Eliot writes of it with enthusiasm in *Adam Bede;* Professor Illingsworth argues from it in his *Personality.* And the historian, the poet, the novelist, and the philosopher are all of them right. It is wonderful, this amazing facility of the child for imbibing spiritual enlightenment. He has a perfect genius for mysticism. His insight is astounding. We are never quite so receptive again. Tell a little child the glorious story of Bethlehem—the vigil of the shepherds, the song of the angels, the Babe in the manger! How he drinks it all in! Tell the same story to an adult, and he wants to debate with you about what he is pleased to call the *Incarnation!* Tell a little child the story of the Cross; tell him of its unutterable love and anguish; tell him that Jesus died for him! He will accept it all, and find no difficulty anywhere. Relate to an adult the same awful facts, and he will ask for a theory of the *Atonement!* But the child's view is the true view, and the adult will come back to it if he lives long enough and becomes wise enough. Yes; I will hold up this picture of these

merry children and their empty pitchers to-morrow; it will at least encourage the teachers and the parents. They will surely see, as they look upon it, how wonderfully open and ready and eager these children are for the truth their seniors are so anxious to impart. If only we seniors knew how to impart it with simplicity, winsomeness and grace!

III

The second picture is a *Picture of Mockery.* For see what a gloom settles on the screen! *'They came to the wells, and found no water.'* I doubt if this old world of ours contains anything more grievous than the bitter disappointment of a little child. Only last evening I was reading an experience of Booker Washington's. It was in the early days of his brave struggle for the uplift of the emancipated slaves. And this is what he says: 'Early one morning I was standing near the dining-room door, listening to the complaints of the students. The complaints that morning were especially emphatic and numerous, for the whole breakfast had been a failure. One of the girls, who had obtained nothing to eat, came out to the well to draw some water to drink, to take the place of the meal which she had been unable to get. When she reached the well she found that, the rope being broken, she could get no water. She turned from the well, and said, in a bitterly disappointed tone, not knowing that I could hear her: "We can't even get water to drink at

this school!" I think no one remark ever came so near discouraging me as that one.' It is a companion picture to the one before me. *'They came to the wells, and found no water.'* Yes; it is a bitter thing to disappoint a child. The empty stocking on Christmas morning; the pouring rain on the day of the picnic; the broken promise or the shattered toy! But there are some disappointments that gather to themselves all the elements of a wicked mockery. Here in the picture is a well; but a well without water! That is the irony of it. There is external gear and paraphernalia without the internal fountain and supply. That picture, as an anniversary study, is a very searching and a very effective one. I fancied, sitting in John's chair, that my hand would tremble even as I displayed it, lest it should seem but an emblem of my own poor ministry. It is so easy to present, like the well to which these Jewish children came, the outward form, without the spring that cools parched lips with satisfying draughts. A well without water; a ministry without freshness; a Church without vitality; a teacher without insight! If the first picture provoked my smiles, this one may surely move me to apprehension and to tears!

IV

The third picture—the saddest of them all—is a *Picture of Misery. 'They returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and*

*covered their heads.'* It is a pitiful picture, this third one. It asks Mrs. Browning's historic question over again:

Do you hear the children weeping, O my brothers,
Ere the sorrow comes with years?
They are leaning their young hands against their mothers,
And that cannot stop their tears.
The young lambs are bleating in the meadows,
The young birds are chirping in the nest,
The young fawns are playing with the shadows,
The young flowers are blowing towards the west;
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
They are weeping bitterly!
They are weeping in the playtime of the others,
In the country of the free!

It is a dreadful thing to think that little children may turn away from our ministries as these children in the picture turned away from the mocking well. Charles Bradlaugh is a case in point. We recall, with a sorrow that is almost anger, the melancholy fact that there was a day when, like the children in the picture, he went with his empty pitcher to the well. He carried his doubts, that is to say, to his minister. And his minister, so far from showing him the sympathy that he had a right to expect, threw up his hands in horror, and reported the young sceptic to his father. *'He returned with his vessel empty; he was ashamed and confounded, and covered his head.'*

And the pity of it is that all this stands in such ghastly contrast to the very essence and nature of the Gospel that we represent. Does that Gospel ever disappoint? We remember the deathbed of

Oliver Cromwell. Turning to those about him, he exclaimed: *'All the promises of God are in Him Yea, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God by us—by us, in Jesus Christ.'* And we remember the more recent deathbed of General Booth. 'They are sure, they are sure, the promises of God, if we only believe.' Yes; the glory of the Gospel is its unimpeachable integrity, its splendid reliability, its absolute security. It never disappoints, and it is a thousand shames if we make it disappointing.

Does the *Bible* ever disappoint? Do children ever get weary of the stories of Joseph and Moses and Samuel and Daniel? There are no children's stories in the world to compare with them. As Alexander Smith says, in *Dreamthorpe:* 'All history unrolls before me! I breathe the morning air of the world while the scent of Eden's roses yet lingered in it; while it vibrated only to the world's first burst of nightingales and to the laugh of Eve. What a silence in these ancient records as of a half-peopled world! What bleating of flocks; what green pastoral rest; what indubitable human existence! Across brawling centuries of blood and war I hear the bleating of Abraham's flocks, the tinkling of the bells of Rebekah's camels! O men and women so far separated, and yet so near, by what miraculous power do I know ye all? What King's court can boast such company? What School of Philosophy such wisdom?' The Bible never disappointed a little child yet.

Does *Jesus* ever disappoint? Did ever teacher find a child turning heavily away from one of His graceful parables, or from one of His matchless miracles, or from any of the enchanting stories of His own wonderful life? No, no, no! That never happens. And, just because it never happens, I must learn to understand the Gospel more perfectly, and to know my Bible more familiarly, and to love the Saviour more intimately. And then never, never, *never* in my ministry will this evil and bitter thing come to pass that these pictures so pathetically represent: *'Their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters; they came to the wells and found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads.'*

V

Helped by a glorious day—one of those days on which every nerve tingles with the ecstasy of living—we had a capital anniversary at Silverstream next day. And on the Monday morning, as John and I sat together on the broad verandah, I told him of the picture-gallery that I had discovered in his Bible.

## III

## TABLOIDS

'YES, sir,' replied the chemist, after listening to the tale of my requirements, 'and would you like it in *liquid* or in *tabloid* form?'

Until that moment I had no idea that the commodity I sought was prepared in tabloid form. But I was not surprised. We take everything nowadays by way of tabloids. The tabloid represents the spirit of the age. At least, it represents one of them. For there are two, and they are twins; although, unlike most twins, they bear no resemblance to each other. We are all under their influence. Some are dominated by the *first,* whilst, in others, the *second* has gained the upper hand; but, in each of us, to some extent, *both* tendencies are simultaneously at work. The one is the spirit of the *Tabloid;* the other is the spirit of the *Tableau.*

For, oddly enough, the passion for the spectacular and the passion for compression go side by side. So far as a man is under the authority of the Tableau Spirit, he believes in making the most of everything. His life is a kind of displayed advertisement. He speaks—metaphorically, at any rate—at the top of his voice; he puts all his goods in the window; he

works up tremendous excitements over the most trivial events; he runs a very big business on a very small capital; with a minimum of ability he secures to himself a maximum of publicity; his favorite text is the warning against hiding one's light under a bushel. Dominated by the Tableau Spirit, we like to see much made of little. We like to see molehills tricked out as mountains. We like to see commonplaces transformed into sensations. It affords us infinite delight to see the small episodes of street-life converted into the thrills of the cinematograph. And, if the newspaper contains no intelligence of first-class importance, we like matters of comparative insignificance to be glorified with scare headlines. We indignantly deny, of course, that such an artifice can please us; but there are some respects in which the pressmen know our tastes better than we ourselves do. This is *one* of the tendencies of the time; but it is not the only one. For whilst, on the one hand, we like to see much made of little, we like, on the other, to see little made of much. We admire the woman who, taking a knuckle of veal or a shin of beef, makes with it a huge cauldron of soup; but we admire no less the woman who, with the same viand, makes a jelly that an invalid can hold in a wine-glass.

Now it is not too much to say that, at this moment, the tabloid dominates the world. We glory in condensed extracts. A neat stack of tins on the grocer's counter represents a herd of oxen or a flock of sheep.

We buy a shoal of fish in a small bottle. Many of the necessities of commerce and many of the commodities of life are served up in tabloid form. In a vest-pocket we carry, side by side, the neat little phial that contains our food-tabloids and the neat little phial that contains our medicine-tabloids. You can tell which is which by the labels! And so we make our way through life. We like everything boiled down. The joint must be reduced to a jelly. Like Champagne Shorder, one of Harold Begbie's creations, we are infatuated by *pocket editions.*

'I can't love anything that isn't a pocket edition!' Shorder exclaims, in the last chapter of *The Vigil.* Shorder was himself a big, broad-faced man, and had the appearance of a generous and easy-living yeoman with a taste for horseflesh.

'I don't know why it is,' this big man said, in a burst of confidence, to Beatrice Haly. 'I don't know why it is, but I'm fond of all *little* things. I like little flowers. I like little hills. These Downs, for me, knock the Alps into a cocked hat. I'm in love with little Andrea. She's worth all the rest of God's universe to me. I can't love anything that isn't a pocket edition!'

This is excellent up to that point: the trouble is that it seldom stops at that. We indulge, not only in *pocket* editions, which are excellent, but in *abridged* editions, which are execrable. In the course of a fireside conversation the other evening, my companion happened to mention the Great Wall of

China. I casually remarked that the best description known to me of the Great Wall was Robinson Crusoe's. My friend imagined that he had misheard me. He had no idea, he said, that Robinson Crusoe travelled in China. He was the victim, of course, of an abridged edition.

We take our politics in tabloid form nowadays. Fifty years ago, when a statesman addressed himself to the magnificent problems of imperial administration, our fathers liked to unfold the paper next morning and to see the verbatim report running into half-a-dozen columns. Every word was eagerly devoured; and the arguments of the speech formed the staple fabric of the day's conversation. We have improved upon—or receded from—that order of things. We like now to be told that the speaker arrived in a taxi; that he wore a grey suit; that a red carnation adorned his button-hole; that he emphasized his points by waving his pince-nez in his left hand; and that, on resuming his seat, he looked pale but gratified. Then having made this concession to the dramatic, the spectacular—the Tableau Spirit—we proceed to do homage to the Spirit of the Tabloid. The account of what the speaker said must be rigorously epitomized. We want his epigrams, his witticisms, his clever thrusts, and his salient points; but that is all. The oration must be boiled down. So closely do the Tableau Spirit and the Tabloid Spirit attend upon each other.

The tabloid is a great public convenience. It is

an enormous boon to be able to carry an immense quantity of matter in an infinitesimal space. The art of making tabloids is well worth learning. In the *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*—'the man who wrested the sceptre from tyrants and the lightning from heaven'—there is a story of a hatter who desired to place a signboard over his shop. He made out on a sheet of paper the words JOHN BROWN MAKES AND SELLS HATS FOR READY MONEY. He then asked a friend what he thought of it. 'Oh,' his friend replied, 'cut out "MAKES AND"; nobody cares who makes the hat so long as it is good; and you might prefer, later on, to *buy* and sell.' The sentence now read JOHN BROWN SELLS HATS FOR READY MONEY. He then consulted a second friend. 'Dear me!' exclaimed this man, 'why, this is an insult to the community! Ready money, indeed! Strike that out and it's just the thing!' The sentence then read JOHN BROWN SELLS HATS. He thereupon showed it to a third friend, who, on seeing it, burst into peals of laughter. 'Absurd!' he cried, '*sells* hats! Do you suppose people will expect you to give them away? You don't need to say that they are for sale!' Brown walked straight off to the sign-writer and ordered him to paint a board bearing the simple legend: JOHN BROWN: HATS. That told all that needed telling. The joint had become a jelly. The tabloid was complete!

But I can see that I am running into danger. Unless I am extremely careful I shall give the embarrassing impression that I am hopelessly in love with the lady who reduces the joint to a jelly, and that I am totally blind to the charms of her sister, who makes from it a cauldron of soup. I wish to make no such invidious comparison. And certainly I do not wish to convey the idea that the Tableau Spirit is the villain, and the Tabloid Spirit the hero, of this screed of mine. I recognize fully the merits and demerits of each. The Tableau Spirit has its faults, of course, and they are glaring ones; but we must not forget that the Tabloid Spirit has its sins to answer for. I knew two men in New Zealand who, on a public holiday, set out on a walking tour. They hoped in the course of the day to cover about thirty miles. But, as they were leaving the beaten track, and penetrating the wilds, it was necessary to carry their provisions with them. When they met at the appointed time and place, the one looked at the other in surprise. He was empty-handed.

'Why,' exclaimed Richardson, 'you have brought nothing to eat! We shall be nowhere near boarding-houses or hotels, you know!'

'Oh, I know,' replied Nicholson, 'but it's an awful nuisance carrying food. I've brought a flask of tabloids in my pocket.' He produced it. 'Each of these,' he continued, 'is guaranteed to contain the nutriment of a pound of beef, so I shall be all right.'

All went well until midday. They found them-

selves on a hill-top overlooking the sea, and they sat in the shade of some manuka scrub for a spell. Nicholson bolted a tabloid; Richardson fancied that his companion eyed his own sandwiches a little enviously and passed them to him. Nicholson proudly declined them. He had eaten a pound of beef, he said, and a pound of beef is enough for any man.

Tea-time found them at pretty much the same spot, on their return journey. They rested again. Again the sandwiches were offered. This time, however, they were accepted, and an interesting confession offered in payment.

'Thanks, I will,' Nicholson exclaimed, taking a sandwich; 'and I don't mind telling you now that I've been as hungry as a hunter all day. I've slipped one of those tabloids into my mouth several times. I must have eaten half a bullock since lunch time. But I was never so famished in my life, and I'm glad you brought a good supply!'

Nicholson's experience represents the collapse of the tabloid. There is a place in this world for joints as well as jellies. There is something to be said for bulk. I have often felt that the older school of novelists had mastered that secret. They knew what they were doing when they wrote big books. To us, accustomed as we are to large type, thick pages and ample margins, those ponderous tomes appear forbidding. A three-volume novel requires courage. We hesitate to embark upon a thousand pages. But the men who wrote those books knew

their business. The most fascinating heroine of a short story can never sweep you off your feet. It is a case of How-do-ye-do? and Good-bye! She glides into our lives and out again before we have come to feel at home with her. But Fielding and Smollett and Dickens and Thackeray knew a deeper cunning. They knew that the man who writes a little book—the man who contributes to the tabloid order of literature—must resort to desperate stratagems in seeking to win our affection for his creations. He must make his hero and his heroine, during the brief period for which they hold our attention, do all sorts of wonderful and beautiful and glorious things. Whilst it lasts, the spectacle is positively dazzling, but it does not last long. One has but to take a bird's-eye view of his own experience in order to convince himself that the people who win our hearts are seldom people of this meteoric kind. The older novelists—the men who wrote the big books—knew that there is a fondness that arises from familiarity. We become attached to people through being so long in their company. We even learn to love inanimate objects for the same reason. A house in which we have long lived; a street through which we have daily walked; a tree beneath whose kindly shade we have often rested; a cup that we have always used; a stick that we have constantly carried; a pipe that we have regularly smoked: we all know the poignancy of grief that attends our severance from such priceless things. To pass from the heroine of the

short story to the heroine of the big novel is like passing from an arc-light to a candlestick. But you get fond of the candlestick that you have carried to your room, night after night, for years. And, in the same way, you learn to love the flesh and blood heroes and heroines of the old-fashioned novels, and cherish their memories in your heart for ever afterwards, through having spent so many hours in their society. After the short story you feel as Nicholson felt after swallowing tabloids; after the big novel you feel as he felt on sharing his companion's sandwiches.

Tableau or Tabloid? I should like a little of both. That is why I am heart and soul with Champagne Shorder in his glorification of the pocket edition. For the beauty of the pocket edition is that it eschews the vices, and combines the virtues, of both the Tableau Spirit and the Tabloid Spirit. It is like the tabloid in its compactness, yet the bulk is there; and, as you turn the pages, the whole stupendous drama passes before you. The paper is so fine, and the type so neat, and the binding so dainty, that it has been possible to print every word of the masterpiece in a book that will slip into your pocket.

The universe in which we live is a neat little phial of tabloids. 'I believe,' says Walt Whitman—

I believe a leaf of grass is no less than a journey-work of the stars,
And the pismire is equally perfect, and the grain of sand, and the egg of the wren,
And the tree-toad is a chef-d'œvre for the highest,

And the running blackberry would adorn the parlors of Heaven,
And the narrowest hinge in my hand puts to scorn all machinery,
And the cow, crunching with depressed head, surpasses any stature,
And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions of infidels.

Therein lies the wonder of all really wonderful things. An acorn is a wonderful thing; it is a pocket edition of a forest. Space is a wonderful thing; it is the tabloid of infinity. Time is a wonderful thing; it is the tabloid of eternity. The Bible is a wonderful thing; it is a pocket edition of the thought of God. A baby is a wonderful thing; it is a pocket edition of everything. And more even than any of these, the Christian life is a wonderful thing. And its real wonder arises from the fact that it is a pocket edition of the highest life of all. A Christian life is the reproduction of the stately idyll of the four Gospels, just as this neat little pocket edition on my desk is a representation of the three bulky volumes at the public library.

Though Christ a thousand times
In Bethlehem be born,
If He's not born in thee
Thy soul is all forlorn.

The Cross on Calvary
Will never save thy soul;
Thy Cross in thine own heart
Alone can make thee whole!

That is the point. The Christ-child is born afresh; and the heart is the inn; and the angels sing again as they sang in the fields of Bethlehem; and shep-

herds and sages come once more to see the wonder that has come to pass. And, in that same soul, all the miracles are repeated; blindness vanishes; song visits dumb lips; deafness yields to the hearing of unutterable things; leprosy departs and death trembles into life. In the same soul there is a Garden of Gethsemane and a betrayal by means of a kiss. And in that soul there is a Cross with all its horror, its shame, its anguish and its everlasting triumph. And all men gaze upon that life with wonder, for they know that it is a pocket edition of the glory ineffable. And they feel, instinctively but confidently, that that glory can be revealed to men in no lovelier or more intelligible way.

## IV

## OLIVER SPREADBURY

Poor Oliver Spreadbury! Everybody pokes fun at him. That—combined with the fact that the postman has just handed me a fourteen-page letter in his handwriting—is why I have this morning dedicated my pen to his defence. Oliver's only weakness—if it be a weakness—is a fondness for being first. There is a terrible tradition to the effect that, when he was a very small boy, he and his classmates agreed, after Sunday School, to play at being in Heaven. The scheme collapsed, however, in the process of allotting the parts. Oliver made it perfectly clear that, if he couldn't be God, he wouldn't play at all. He is now residing at Castlewood; and, in the course of his long letter, he gives me to understand that the local magnates are mere puppets; it is *he* who pulls the strings. The local editors, ministers, and public officials are guided by his wishes and commands.

Oliver Spreadbury has set me thinking. The most vital opinion that a man ever forms is his opinion of himself. It is therefore essential that a man should think accurately of himself. We are in a good deal of confusion at this point. The Church

has for ages taught, and the world has for ages believed, that there is some mysterious virtue in thinking that two and two make *three,* and some hideous vice in supposing that they make *five.* Or, to drop the language of hyperbole and to adopt the phraseology of fact, the Church has taught, and the world has believed, that it is an evil thing for a man to think too highly of himself and an excellent thing for him to think too meanly of himself. The theory is absurd. The fallacy must be exploded. In justice to Oliver Spreadbury, I repudiate it root and branch. A man should think justly of himself. It is just as great a mistake to say that two and two make *three* as to say that they make *five.* It is just as serious a defect for a man to think too little of himself as to think too much. Indeed, in presenting my case for Oliver Spreadbury, I am prepared to argue that, of the two, the man who thinks too little of himself is the greater menace to the general good. There is something to be said for the Scotsman who mingled with his supplications a petition in which he craved a guid conceit o' himsel'.

We are always forming opinions of other people. We do it automatically. We even do it whilst we sleep. We meet a man overnight; we form only a blurred and confused impression of him; we go to bed; and, on waking in the morning, we find ourselves possessed of a clear-cut estimate of the character of our new acquaintance. With the greatest ease we form our opinions of the people about us.

But a man's impressions of other people do not affect his character and conduct as profoundly as do his impressions of himself. And, strangely enough, our judgments of ourselves are not so easily formed. Such opinions do not come involuntarily. The automatic opinion-forming machine that we all carry within our breasts has its limitations. It differentiates sharply between our opinions of other people and our opinions of ourselves. If we desire a just estimate of our own personalities, we must take some pains to weigh the evidence and form one. And, since the effort demands some pains, most of us neglect it. But our neglect does not affect in the slightest degree the stern fact that the most vital opinion that a man ever forms is his opinion of himself.

Very few of us treat ourselves with courtesy. We hold ourselves at arm's length. Many a man behaves towards himself as though he and himself had never been introduced. He is awkward and shy in his own society. He eyes himself furtively as he would eye the strange and solitary companion who occupies the opposite corner of a railway compartment. He does not know what to make of himself. He is at no pains to cultivate his own acquaintance. He never wishes himself a jovial Good-morning on waking; he never has a good laugh with himself in the course of the day; he never says an encouraging word to himself when things are going badly; he never shakes hands with himself or pats

himself on the back when things are going well. He simply tolerates himself. He sees as little of himself as possible. His attitude towards himself is one of strict neutrality. He would not get the best out of a horse or a dog if he treated it in such a way; how, then, can he hope, under such impossible conditions, to get the best out of himself?

It is in our conversation that we betray our ignorance. That explains the rigid restraint that some of us place upon our tongues when we find ourselves at the fireside. We know that, in the breasts of our companions, the automatic opinion-forming machines are all at work. We can almost hear them clicking. As long as we are as silent as the Sphinx we may beguile those mechanical monitors into the delusion that we are as wise as Solon. A little speech would shatter that pleasing fantasy. As long as men say nothing about themselves, you suspect that they have taken the pains to form a just estimate of themselves; but, nine times out of ten, when men speak of themselves, they prove conclusively their complete ignorance of the theme with which they are dealing. A man may speak of himself in terms of adulation or in terms of abuse; we are not deceived. The automatic machines continue to register accurately. He may adopt the accent of self-esteem or self-depreciation; it matters little; we feel instinctively that we are listening to a man who is by no means master of his subject.

The language of conceit is seldom dangerous—

to the listener. Like a traction-engine, it is invariably preceded by a red flag. Before the vain sentence is uttered, there is something about the speaker that warns you that the statement that he is about to make is not altogether reliable. It is as though a policeman stepped into your shop to tell you that the man coming down the street would probably tender you counterfeit currency. You are ready for him when he enters; you test the coin as soon as he offers it; and you are not surprised to find that it does not ring true. The man who, in talking to us about himself, adopts this tone, seldom misleads us. Like the novelist, he is good enough to write *'A Romance'* across his title-page before he starts.

Self-depreciation, however, is slightly more perplexing. Only slightly. For no man who speaks disparagingly of himself is to be implicitly trusted. He is sincere or he is not. Does he honestly desire that we should accept his self-detraction at its face value? Does he really wish us to think the less of him, to deny him the confidence that we have hitherto reposed in him, and to regard him henceforth as unworthy of our affection and esteem? In a word, would he be pleased if we told him frankly that we agreed with him? If not, he is insincere; and there is no more to be said. He is attempting to compass some ulterior end; or else, like Uriah Heep, he is seeking to win for himself a spurious reputation for humility. If, on the other hand, he

*is* sincere, we are driven to the conclusion that he is not quite well. No man of healthy body and healthy mind deliberately sets himself to earn the contempt or distrust of his fellows. In either case, when the conversation takes this turn, it is time that the party broke up. Things have reached a dead-end; progress is impossible.

All the conventions to the contrary notwithstanding, every man should have a good opinion of himself. It should, of course, be, approximately at least, a just opinion; but it should be a good opinion. In every club, congregation, and community, there are three classes of people. The *first* class, comprising, perhaps, one per cent. of the people, consists of those who have taken the trouble to form a just estimate of their own character and value. The *second* class, comprising, let us say, nineteen per cent. of the people, consists of those who have formed too high an opinion of themselves. And the *third* class, comprising the remaining eighty per cent. of the people, consists of those who have formed too mean an estimate of their own worth. Of these three classes, the third presents by far the greatest problem. For these people—the overwhelming majority—are paralysed!

Yes, they are paralysed by disesteem. Every minister knows exactly what I mean. As he surveys his congregation he sees a few people of the Oliver Spreadbury type. Clearly, they think too highly of themselves. But, as a rule, these people do some-

thing. The inflated estimate that they set upon their own importance tends to thrust them into a certain prominence. Pride leads to activity. Look at Oliver Spreadbury! You could not keep him out of office with a set of chains or a cart rope. In his fourteen-page letter he tells me of all the positions that he holds in the public life of Castlewood. He is President of this and Secretary of that and Captain of the other. And, when the world has so much work waiting to be done, one views with tolerance any factor—however conspicuous its disfigurements—that sets in motion hands that would otherwise be idle. The people, as I shall presently show, are not the best workers, either in Church or State, but they are workers whose services are by no means to be despised.

The people who think too poorly of themselves—the eighty per cent.—are, for the most part, idlers. They are lookers-on. They share no activities and shoulder no responsibilities. And why? The reason is perfectly simple. These people do not mean to shirk their duty. They have convinced themselves that it is not within the compass of their powers to render effective service to Church or State. If you can wheedle them into attempting some small task they will be both astonished and delighted at discovering that they are not so helpless as they had supposed.

The Church has an awkward knack of struggling with life's smaller problems and neglecting the larger

ones. We have exhausted the entire battery of vituperation and denunciation on the few unfortunates who, like Oliver Spreadbury, have formed too exalted an opinion of themselves; and we have said nothing and done nothing towards grappling with the other problem. Yet that other problem is far more acute. The people who think too highly of themselves have a way, sooner or later, of bumping their heads against the stars; the stern discipline of life moderates their swollen self-esteem; something of the kind will happen to Oliver Spreadbury one of these days. But the people who think too poorly of themselves are seldom cured. They drift through life aimlessly and helplessly. In their ears a great cry is constantly ringing—the cry of those in need; but so paralysed are all their powers that it does not occur to them that they have it in them to bless their fellow men. After all, our wealth consists, not so much in our possessions, as in our knowledge of our possessions. We are not really rich unless we know that we are rich. In the same way, we are not really strong unless we know that we are strong. To be of any use to the world, a man must not only be able to do things; he must know that he is able to do them.

I said just now that the people whose exaggerated self-appreciation pushes them into positions of prominence are not the world's best workers. They have their value, but it is not a superlative value. Oliver Spreadbury covers a good deal of ground, yet

he does not get very far. His restless activity does not count for much. He does not make the Church attractive to those who know him. He does not make religion lovable. The aristocracy of human service is made up of a select company gathered out of all three of the classes that I just now enumerated. There are a few who have correctly assessed their own worth and have devoted themselves to tasks commensurate with their powers. There are a few who, once upon a time, thought too highly of themselves, but who have been humbled and sweetened by disaster. And there are a few who, once upon a time, thought too meanly of themselves, but who have learned to their delight that they possess talents which, in the old days, they never for a moment suspected. It is by these people, gathered from all three classes, that the work of the world and of the Church is being done.

There are loud sins and silent sins. There are sins that proclaim themselves and sins that conceal themselves. The sins of the people who think too much of themselves are showy sins; the sins of the people who think too little of themselves are subtle sins; but they are sins none the less. The heresy that there is something admirable in saying that two and two make *three;* the heresy that there is some mysterious virtue in self-depreciation, leads to a great and bitter evil. It leads men, perhaps unconsciously, to deal with themselves too severely; and a man has no more right to deal too harshly with

himself than he has to deal too harshly with others. The evil has endless ramifications. Along one line it leads to the wretchedness of asceticism. Thus, I find the saintly Dr. Pusey calling himself a monster and a leper; wearing haircloth next his skin; scourging himself until the blood flows; selecting the foods that are most distasteful to him and drinking nothing but cold water as a reminder that he was only fit to dwell where no drop would cool the eternal flame. Obviously, he is too hard on himself. Along another line, the heresy leads to strange and fantastic repudiations. I have known an honored minister, towards the close of a powerful and fruitful life-work, to declare in a morbid moment that he himself was a hypocrite, and that his whole ministry was a structure of wood, hay and stubble which the testing flames would swiftly consume. 'When I went to America to convert the Indians,' says John Wesley, in the early pages of his *Journal,* 'I was not myself converted.' But, years afterwards, he writes against the entry: 'I am not sure of this.' He evidently felt that, in a moment of deep depression or strong emotion, a man may easily judge himself far too severely.

Ian Maclaren has told, with characteristic tenderness, the story of Andrew Harris of Rochdale. Andrew had been for many years a member of the church at Thorngreen. He was universally honored and beloved. But nothing would persuade him to accept office. At length, however, he went away

for a holiday, and, in his absence, was unanimously elected. After a while came the night for hearing objections. When the beadle, according to custom, went to the door and called into the darkness for objection to the name of Andrew Harris, Andrew himself stepped in. He told how, in his youth, he had committed a great sin. He had repented and obtained the forgiveness of God and man, and had fully compensated and satisfied those whom he had injured. But he felt that his life was clouded. 'There's a man I envy every day,' he said, 'and mair the nicht than ever; not the rich and powerful; na, na; it is the man whose life is clear. The hands must be clean that bear the vessels of the Lord, and these hands are not clean; wherefore I take objection, being a true witness, against the life of Andrew Harris, and declare he is not fit to be an elder of the kirk!'

Andrew Harris reminds me of Victoria Sampson. The old lady was one of the sweetest and saintliest characters I have ever met. Her exemplary life and beautiful unselfishness were an inspiration and a rebuke to us all. But she would not join the Church. When I mentioned the matter to her, her lips quivered and she burst into tears.

'No, no,' she sobbed, 'that can never be! You do not know me! My heart is a cage of unclean birds. It is deceitful, deceitful above all things and desperately wicked!' And she swayed to and fro in her grief. And thus, to our sorrow, we make

His love too narrow with false limits of our own and we magnify His strictness with a zeal He will not own. We slam in our faces the doors that the everlasting mercy had widely opened.

# V

## THE POISONED SPRING

### I

The authorities at Jericho felt that a man who could do things by magic would represent a distinct acquisition to the life of the city. They therefore welcomed Elisha with open arms. They regarded him pretty much as the Mayor and Corporation of Hamelin Town regarded the Pied Piper. In neither case did the civic rulers know anything—or care anything—concerning the source of the visitor's inspiration. All that they knew was that they had their local pests and problems. Pests and problems can, in the ordinary way, only be conquered by hard thinking and hard working. In the ordinary way. But the Pied Piper's way was not the ordinary way. Nor was Elisha's. In the arrival of the magicians, the aldermen—in each of these cases—saw the possibility of a short cut to the attainment of very desirable ends. Hamelin was infested by rats. To rid a city of such troublesome vermin is extremely difficult. It involves a campaign skilfully conceived and vigorously executed. But when it seemed that the Pied Piper's wondrous lute could whisk the rats away by magic, the aldermen began

to feel that life was worth living. They had discovered a labor-saving device such as none of them had ever dreamed of. The authorities at Jericho enjoyed a similar experience. They were having trouble with the water supply. The city was flourishing, and the country behind it was a picture of agricultural prosperity. The cattle were almost buried in the long rich grass; the valleys luxuriated in the picturesque vesture of their fruitful orchards and neatly kept plantations; the terraces along the slopes were draped by the ample foliage of olives, vines, and balsams; the crests were crowned by the graceful fronds of ten thousand palm trees; and the air was loaded with the perfume of roses and made musical by the humming of the bees. The city rejoiced in this abounding prosperity; and, but for one drawback, Jericho would have been the happiest of thirty royal cities of Canaan. The waters were tainted! That was the crook in Jericho's lot! That was the fly in the ointment! *The waters were tainted! The waters were tainted!*

II

One of these days I shall be appointed to preach a Municipal sermon of some kind. I can almost feel the great day coming. The church will be crowded with mayors and aldermen. When the occasion comes, my subject will be ready. I shall preach on the perplexities of the aldermen at Jericho. *'Behold,'* they cried to Elisha, as they gazed in astonishment

at the wonders that accompanied his ordination to the prophetic office, *'behold, the situation of this city is pleasant, but the waters are tainted!'* There lies the trouble!

Life is based on its simplicities. Everything depends on the water. In his *Wild Life in a Southern County,* Richard Jefferies says that if, in certain parts of England, a visitor were to follow the watercourses, keeping to the banks of stream and rill and river, he would suppose that England is a densely populated country; but if he were carefully to avoid the watered valleys and were to keep to the back country, he would come to a diametrically opposite conclusion. The reason is that the people flock to the streams.

And the stream is the pride of the city. The inhabitants of the grimy towns love, on occasions, to visit its upper reaches. There its serpentine folds are flanked by green banks on which the wild flowers twinkle, and are draped by graceful willows in which the thrushes sing. The kingfisher sits on a low bough, admiring his radiant image reflected in the mirror below him; whilst the coot and the moorhen dart in and out among the reeds and rushes. Or, even as, in office and workroom, the people pursue their ordinary avocations, they like to catch glimpses of the broad sheet of water, spanned by many bridges, as it winds in and out among the streets and warehouses of the busy town. Further down, the river is a scene of bustling activity. Wharves

and quays jut out into its waters; huge sheds filled with merchandise, and stores packed with produce line both banks; and great ships glide in and out like monstrous shuttles that, in passing to and fro, weave the life of the city into the life of the world beyond. Viewed under each of these phases, the stream is a source of constant pride to the citizens; they conduct their visitors to eminences that command a good view of its tortuous course; and they feel that, deprived of it, their city would seem strangely poor. There, then, flows the stream—the glory of the city—the natural representative of all those beautifying, satisfying, fertilizing forces that, to its vast enrichment, pour themselves through human life.

III

But our streams tend to become tainted; and the tainted stream means a stricken city. One of our most eminent historians has traced the rise of the City of London from the time when elephants and hippopotami crashed through the jungle that occupied the site of the Strand down to the coronation of his Majesty the King. He shows how, generation after generation, the population has grown by leaps and bounds. But he shows something else. He shows that, for centuries, the population only increased through the inrush to the city of the people from the country. Through more than five hundred years the deaths enormously exceeded the births. And why? He attributed it entirely to Lon-

don's tainted water. However pure the stream may be at its fountain-head, it tends to become polluted in the course of its flow. The loveliest things in life are exposed to the same peril. Literature, music, art, sport, religion—they are noble streams, but they are easily poisoned. Unless some filtrating and purifying agency is constantly at work, contamination is inevitable. Let anyone who cares to do so examine the literature, the music, the art, the sport, and the religion of the empires of antiquity, or of the pagan peoples of to-day, and he will quickly recognize the tendency to taint. Even the temples are the abodes of cruelty and the shrines of uncleanness. The loveliest stream of all—the stream of worship—has become foul. And when a people's devotion is sullied, its culture, however pretentious and ornate, soon becomes abominable. *'Behold, the situation of this city is pleasant, but the waters are tainted.'* The people felt that, as long as *that* was so, nothing was secure.

IV

I do not know exactly by what witchery of alchemy Elisha cleansed the tainted stream. *'Bring me a new cruse,'* he said, *'and put salt therein.' And he went forth unto the spring of the waters and cast the salt in there and said, 'Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters!'* Something of the same kind happens every day. The rivers of the world run down to the sea, bearing with them the pollution

of the cities through which they flow. And the sea is salt. Its saltness is the salvation of humanity. If the sea were to lose its saltness, the earth would instantly become uninhabitable. The salt, salt sea receives the tainted rivers, and, by its saltness, they are sweetened and purified and healed. He who holds the sea in the hollow of His hand says every day as Elisha said at Jericho, *'Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters!'* And the sunshine gathers the moisture back into the skies; and the clouds distil it on the upland hills; and the springs of the valley welcome it as it again trickles down the slopes; and, once more clear as crystal and sparklingly pure, it sets off with a song to satisfy, refresh, and cleanse the hot and thirsty city. Again, as it sweeps through the land, it becomes tainted; and again, as it plunges into the sea, it becomes cleansed; and so the cycle continues everlastingly.

V

The one point that I shall have to make clear in that Municipal sermon of mine will be the practical one. The waters can only be cleansed by *addition:* they can never be cleansed by *subtraction.* In order to heal the tainted stream, Elisha threw something *into it;* he did not attempt to take anything *out* of it. His behavior in that respect is intensely significant. I have often seen prophets attempting to cleanse the fountains of a city's life. They have usually failed; and they have failed because they relied too much

upon a principle of subtraction. They attacked *this;* they condemned *that;* they denounced the *other.* With hot hearts and angry eyes they said that *this* was wrong and that *that* was wrong; that our men ought not to do *this* and our women ought not to do *that.* They rebuked us, exposed us, denounced us; but, for all their vehemence and passion, they did not heal us! You cannot cure a patient by enlarging, in grim and ghastly detail, on the loathsomeness of his disease. He needs a positive prescription. You cannot save a city by scolding it. You cannot purify the streams of public life by taking out the things that defile; you must pour into the hearts and minds of the people some gracious and potent influence that will sweeten and strengthen and save. I often think admiringly of John Keble. As he walked amidst the cowslips and the buttercups of the Gloucestershire village in which he was curate, he worried about the world. But how could he right its wrongs? Then, like Elisha, he wondered if he could throw some cleansing influence into its tainted waters. He poured all the sweetness of his soul into a volume of verse. He published it anonymously under the title of *The Christian Year.* It was the very thing that England needed. It sold in scores of thousands of copies, and the stream of the nation's life was healed.

I find it difficult to write in this strain without recalling Leonard Prendergast. Leonard was an excellent fellow. I knew him first as a student at the

university. He afterwards married and settled at Swinton, and became an officer of the Church there. But things went sadly with him. The business that he bought turned out to be a much poorer affair than it had been represented to be; and he considered that his predecessor—also a church member—had swindled him. Then his wife's health broke down and she was for many months an invalid; and, just as she began to give promise of better things, their little boy died. During this long and bitter experience, Leonard felt that the people at the Church were less sympathetic than they should have been, and his censure was probably just. He forgot that each individual in the congregation had sorrows and worries of his own; he forgot, too, that people always feel more sympathy than they express. He made no allowances; and, as a result, the experience soured him. He gradually withdrew from church life altogether. He still attends, at least occasionally. But, in conversation, he speaks acidly of all Churches. He loves to expatiate upon their coldness, their insensibility, their indifference. With pitiless analysis, he exposes the weaknesses of ecclesiastical life and lays bare all its least attractive traits. I would give a good deal to have Leonard in my congregation when I preach my sermon to mayors and aldermen. He would see that criticism, to be of value, must be *constructive*. If he really desires to transform the Church as it is into the Church of his ideal, he can only do it by pouring something

from his life into its life; he will never do it by taking something out.

VI

As I survey from the pulpit the faces of the City Fathers, I shall be tempted to turn from matters of public policy to matters of private life. There is the science of friendships, for example; always an alluring theme. 'Have you a friend?' I shall enquire, warming to that phase of my subject, 'have you a friend? And does that friend of yours, in certain respects, disappoint you? He occasionally says things and does things that grate upon you. He proves himself to be something other and something less than you would wish your friend to be. What then? Are you on that account to pick holes in him, to forget his excellences and magnify his vices? The best way of showing that a stick is crooked is to lay a straight one beside it. Be to your friend what you would wish him to be to you! Depend upon it, the traits that you deplore are symptoms of a struggle in his soul of which you know little or nothing. Pour into his life some warm, enriching, uplifting influence; it will make all the difference to him. It is only by adding something to the tainted waters that you can effectively cleanse them!'

Having got as far as this, I shall probably go a step further. I shall come to close grips. I shall remind myself that I have to deal, not only with

the mayor but with the man. He will be a mayor for twelve brief months: he will be a man to all eternity. Underneath the robes and chains of office is a throbbing human soul. Shall I allow the honors with which these good men have been invested, and the dignities to which they have been called, to deprive them of the richest treasures that I, as a minister, can dispense? For shame! 'Gentlemen,' I shall say, 'you each know your own hearts. You know that life is a great problem, a perpetual struggle, the highest of the high arts. You know, too, better than your most severe critics can tell you, your own failings. You each know, as nobody but you yourself can possibly know, the extent to which the stream of your life has become tainted. You have tried to cleanse it by taking out one thing and by giving up another. You have endeavored to check this habit and to break that one. Gentlemen, I welcome you to this church this morning that I may tell you that you can never heal the tainted waters by *subtraction;* you must heal them by *addition.* The prophet added the cleansing substance to the poisoned fountains. You need, not something *less,* but something *more*—'

VII

And, from that point to the closing sentence, I shall have no difficulties at all. I shall be moving among the sublime simplicities of the everlasting Gospel. I shall forget all about Elisha. For there

is only one Prophet, who, standing at the tainted springs of human experience, can cast the contents of His cruse into the poisoned waters and sweeten all their flow. And to *Him*—the first and the last of the Prophets—all the other prophets bear witness.

## VI

## KISSES

Conscience, according to Hamlet, makes cowards of us all. So do kisses. At least, they have made a coward of me. Ten years ago I took the foolscap sheet on which it is my custom to set down the subjects on which I have it in my heart to write, and, in a bold hand, I added the word *Kisses* to the list. But it is a ticklish topic. The Church very early found herself in trouble over it. In their epistles, Peter and Paul repeatedly urged the Christians of their time to greet one another with a kiss; but, within a century or two, the dignitaries of the Church appear to have wished that the apostolic writers had confined their attention to matters a little more doctrinal and a little less delicate. 'The shameless use of the kiss,' says Clement of Alexandria—and one can almost see his wry face as he says it—'the shameless use of the kiss, which ought to be mystic, occasions foul suspicions and evil reports.' Who then can wonder at my prolonged hesitation? I am on the horns of a dilemma. How can I pretend to have dealt with human life with any reasonable measure of completeness if, wilfully and deliberately, I have shirked the subject of kisses? And yet, if I venture upon the alluring

theme, what am I to say? Shall I write sympathetically, approvingly, even glowingly? The experiences of the Apostles rise before me and seem to be waving warning hands. Shall I write coldly, reproachfully, censoriously? For shame! How could I?

There, then, is the difficulty, and it is great enough, in all conscience. Because of its magnitude the years have come and gone; the foolscap sheet has been consulted hundreds of times; the topics above the word and the topics below it have all been dealt with long ago; it alone of the many themes suggested remains uncancelled. I can endure that silent reproof no longer. To-day—not without special reason—I address myself at last to the tantalizing subject of kisses.

It happens to be my Silver Wedding Day; but *that* is not the special reason to which I refer; for, obviously, *that* has nothing to do with it. The special reason arises from the experiences of yesterday. I saw yesterday, more clearly than I had ever seen before, how very human an affair a kiss really is. We had been invited—my wife and I—to visit some friends whose beautiful home is perched up among the fern-clad hills, some distance out of town. I resolved to call, on the way, on old Mrs. Field—Fieldie, as she called herself and as we always called her—whom I knew to be very ill. I found on arrival that she was much worse than I had supposed. Her daughter came on tiptoe to the door,

opened it silently, and raised her finger admonishingly, as she welcomed me.

'You're just in time,' she said, as I accompanied her to the sick room, 'Fieldie's nearly through!'

She was very old; she had lived a life of singular sweetness and gentleness and charm; her end was like the falling asleep of a tired child. As I approached the bedside, I took her hand and repeated, slowly and softly, one or two very familiar passages of Scripture. She recognized my voice, opened her eyes, and looked up with a weary but pleasant smile. I prayed, very briefly, and I saw her lips form a murmured Amen. I attempted to release my hand, but her thin fingers held it, and I noticed that her lips were moving again. I immediately inclined my ear to her face.

'Kiss me!' she whispered. I reverently touched her forehead with my lips; it seemed such a perfectly natural thing to do; she released my hand on the instant; and I quietly left the room. An hour later she was at rest.

But, by the time that she had passed away, we had reached our destination up among the hills. Our hostess had invited one or two guests to meet us. Among them was Miss Langlands, the matron of the Hillcrest Hospital. I soon discovered that her whole soul was in her work, and that it was no breach of good taste to talk to her about patients and doctors and nurses.

'I'm feeling a little sad this evening,' she said,

'for we lost to-day one of our favorite patients. And, by the way,' she added, 'something very pretty happened in connection with the case. I think it will interest you. I must tell you all about it.' And she drew her chair nearer mine so that we formed a group apart from the rest of the company:

'He was only a little boy of five when he first came to us, seven years ago,' she went on, 'and we knew from the first that his case was hopeless. The wonder is that he lasted so long. He was just a waif. We were never able to trace his parentage or to find any of his relations. He told us that his name was Bennie; and that was all he seemed to know. He was a quiet, thoughtful little chap; he was pleased if you noticed him, yet he never hankered after company; he would sit in a corner of the ward and amuse himself for hours.

'A few months ago a new nurse came to Hillcrest —Sister Rose. She is a pretty girl, of fine figure and high color. She is brimful of life and spirits; her laugh rings through the wards like a peal of bells. Some of the older nurses consider her too giddy and frivolous, but I see nothing wrong with her, and all her patients like her.

'One morning, about ten days ago, I was going round the wards as usual, when, on entering the Clifford Ward, Bennie came smiling from his corner to meet me.

' "Why, Bennie," I exclaimed, "whatever's the matter? You look wonderfully happy this morning!"

'"I am, Matron," he said; and then, partly craning up and partly pulling me down, he whispered, "Sister Rose kissed me this morning; nobody ever kissed *me* before!"

'I really believe that he lived on that kiss for several days. His face would light up with sudden recollection, and we guessed what he was thinking about.

'He collapsed all at once on Sunday and died in his sleep early this morning. It has worried me all day to think that his would have to be a pauper burial; but, just as I was putting on my hat and coat to come up here, Sister Rose came to my room to say that she would like Bennie to be buried at her expense. I felt as if a great weight had been lifted from my mind. I thought it was lovely of her. I was so pleased, both for her sake and for Bennie's.'

And so, twice in an afternoon, I was reminded of our human fondness for kisses. On our way home in the train last night, we heard, at Carisbrook station, of poor old Fieldie's passing. And, for the remainder of the journey, I thought of the kiss that I had imprinted upon her forehead earlier in the day, and of the kiss that meant so much to Bennie. Here, on the one hand, was extreme old age; and here, on the other, was a little child. But in one respect they are both alike. Is it any wonder that, confronted afresh this morning by my foolscap sheet, I find its reproach intolerable? How, after such a twofold experience as that of yesterday's, can I shirk the task any longer?

And now that I have taken up my pen at last, I marvel that I hesitated so long. And that in itself raises a curious question. For *why* did I hesitate? Why should any man hesitate before addressing himself to such a theme? Is it because one particular kind of kiss has meant so much to most of us that, when kisses are mentioned, all other kinds are forgotten? Mr. E. C. Steadman describes a walk home from church on a clear winter's night:

The snow was crisp beneath our feet,
  The moon was full, the fields were gleaming;
By hood and tippet sheltered sweet
  Her face with youth and health was beaming.

The little hand outside her muff—
  O sculptor, if you could but mould it!—
So lightly touched my jacket-cuff,
  To keep it warm I had to hold it.

To have her with me there alone—
  'Twas love and fear and triumph blended;
At last we reached the foot-worn stone
  Where that delicious journey ended.

She shook her ringlets from her hood,
  And with a 'Thank you, Ned,' dissembled,
But bet I knew she understood
  With what a daring wish I trembled.

A cloud passed kindly overhead,
  The moon was slyly peeping through it,
Yet hid his face, as if it said,
  'Come, now or never! do it! do it!'

My lips till then had only known
  The kiss of mother and of sister,
But somehow, full upon her own
  Sweet, rosy, darling mouth—I kissed her!

Perhaps 'twas boyish love, yet still,
  O listless woman! weary lover!
To feel once more that fresh, wild thrill,
  I'd give—But who can live youth over?

This is excellent, and without such kisses life for most people would be very poor. But because such kisses are so delicious and so memorable, we must not assume that there are no others. A rose is a beautiful flower, but we must not let it blind us to the other blossoms in the garden. As any concordance will show at a glance, the Bible is full of kisses. But, of all the kisses in the Bible, only one belongs to the class to which I have just pointed. Obviously, therefore, such kisses do not dominate the situation. We must not allow them to intimidate us.

The Bible is full of kisses because life is full of kisses. An infinite wealth of interest and pathos gathers about the kisses of history. Some of the grimmest and sternest pages in our annals are softened and sweetened by a kiss. I have often felt that Nelson's request for a kiss was one of the most human and one of the most affecting touches in the tremendous drama of Trafalgar's Bay. We all remember Southey's moving record of those stirring events. The battle was practically over: the allied fleets were shattered: Hardy, the captain of the *Victory,* returned to the cockpit to congratulate his dying chief on the completeness of his triumph. Nelson gave him some instructions as to the disposition of the ships, and then, thinking for the first time of himself, he said: 'Don't throw me overboard: bury me with my parents unless the King orders otherwise.' Then looking full into Hardy's face,

'Kiss me, Hardy!' said he.

Hardy knelt down, kissed his cheek, and, a few minutes later, left him for ever.

I like to think of those bronzed sea-dogs kissing each other in the hour that decided the destiny of Europe. When a man fore-fancies his deathbed, he conjures up a picture of a quiet room; he imagines himself surrounded by those who love him best; he likes to think that mother or wife or daughter will hold his hand and smooth his pillow and kiss his forehead at the last. For Nelson, there were no such gentle attendants and no such tender ministries. The ship reeled and staggered as her broadsides were poured into her antagonist: the thunder of the guns was deafening: those whose soft touch the dying man would most have wished to feel were miles and miles away. Their fingers could not close his eyes: their lips could not press his brow. He thought of them wistfully and missed them sadly.

'Kiss me, Hardy!' he murmured.

And beneath the spell of that substitutionary kiss, the greatest sailor since the world began laid down his life for England. And any chaplain will tell you, once his tongue is loosed, of scores of cases exactly like it. In his last agony, many a brave man has hungered for the lips that he can never press again, and, before closing his eyes for ever, has craved a comrade's kiss.

The earliest political speech that I remember reading was a speech about a kiss, and I have read no

parliamentary oration since which has moved me as much. It was the speech in which Mr. Gladstone announced to the House of Commons the death of the Princess Alice. He described the little boy tossing in the delirium of diphtheria, his mother, the Princess, watching ceaselessly beside his bed. Mr. Gladstone told the House how the doctors had warned Her Royal Highness on no account to inhale the child's poisoned breath; how she had laid her cool hand for a moment on the fevered brow; how the child, recognizing his mother, had thrown up his arms and cried 'Kiss me, Mamma, kiss me!' and how the instinct of motherhood had proved stronger than the instinct of self-preservation. The lips of mother and child met; and the Princess paid the penalty with her life. I was only a small boy at the time; but the incident made me feel that royalty was very human; and I think that my allegiance to the throne gathered to itself that day an element of kinship by which it was substantially enriched.

There are, of course, kisses *and* kisses. There are, for example, the kisses that we give a person for his own sake and the kisses that we give him as the representative of a class. Sir Edwin Arnold has a poem in which he describes a visit of Queen Alexandra to the Children's Hospital. One little fellow threw his arms around Her Majesty's neck and kissed her. The Queen made no secret of her pleasure, and, as soon as she had recovered from her surprise, she stooped and kissed the child in

return. In the last verse of his poem, Sir Edwin refers to all the suffering children of the empire, and then, addressing the little fellow who felt the Queen's embrace, he says that 'she kissed them all in kissing you.' Precisely! Therein lies the federal value of a kiss.

There is a law of life which ordains that, the higher we lift a thing, the greater is the damage if it falls. It is just because a kiss may be so sublime a thing that it may be, also, so sinister a thing.

A formal kiss! Is there anything in life as insipid as a formal kiss? And yet even a formal kiss does not sound the lowest depth of degradation. For, every day, summer and winter, somebody, somewhere, betrays the Son of Man; and it is always, always, *always* by a kiss that he does it.

## VII

## THE NOONDAY GHOST

### I

It was black as pitch. John Broadbanks and I were driving home from a service at Diamond Creek. We had hoped for a moonlight journey; but the sky was enveloped in dense clouds.

'We shall have to trust Brownie to keep us in the middle of the road,' said John, craning forward and peering into the darkness on both sides, 'I can't see a thing!'

A few minutes later, we plunged into a long straight avenue of blue-gums, and could just make out their tall tops silhouetted against a patch of paler cloud.

'It reminds you of the dark avenues you read of in the old-fashioned novels,' laughed John; 'if ever you take it into your head to write a ghost-story, you must lay the scene of it just here! It's dark enough and lonely enough for all the spectres in creation.'

'I shall do nothing of the kind,' I replied. 'The ghost in the dark carriage-drive is, as you yourself suggest, a trifle threadbare. I mean to write a ghost-story one of these days; but I propose to break away

from the traditional setting. Instead of appearing in a lonely grove at dead of night, my ghost will come gliding along the pathway at high noon. The sun will be shining; the birds will be singing; people will be going hither and thither about their business, when all at once—*enter, the Ghost!*'

John laughed so loudly that he started a more-pork up on the hill-side, and its weird cry followed us until we were out of the grove of gums. But, although he treated the matter as an excellent joke, I was in earnest. I am often astonished at the failure of our novelists to see the boundless possibilities of the idea. I sometimes read the reviews of the new novels. The disappointing element about them is that they invariably confine their criticism to the things that the author has *put* into the book. They seldom or never draw attention to the things that the author has *left out* of the book. And that is where the fault usually lies. If ever I am entrusted with the task of reviewing works of fiction, I shall consider it my duty to point out, in every such critique, the sublime opportunity that the writer has missed. 'This novel is all very well in its way,' I shall say, with a condescending air, 'but it might have been a masterpiece, a classic—even a best-seller—if only the author had exploited the possibilities of the Noonday Ghost!'

The conception is by no means original. A mortal terror froze the blood of our ancestors whenever they thought of the Noonday Ghost. For centuries

our literature abounded with fearsome references to this horrible monstrosity. Indeed, right away back in the twilight of modern history, we find Tacitus declaring that the Gauls regarded the Noonday Ghost as the most dreadful of all apparitions. Has not Dr. John Martineau told us how, because of their horror of this uncanny visitant, the early Christians regularly held a prayer meeting at the noontide hour? In Russia, too, this weird tradition enjoyed an extraordinary vogue. And even Shelley somewhere describes a party of ladies, merrily chatting together in the middle of the day, when their pleasant intercourse was rudely interrupted by the sudden appearance in their midst of this grim and frightful spectre. The origin of this fantastic legend is probably lost in the mists of antiquity; but, whatever it may have been, I am convinced that the Noonday Ghost is not entirely the creature of a frenzied fancy.

II

For are there no fearful apparitions that appear in broad daylight? Are there no phantoms that haunt us at noon? Are there no shadowy spectres that confront us when the sun is high in the heavens? I think there are. Long after the mists of the dawn have vanished from the hills, and long before the gathering twilight falls upon our path, there are ghosts that glide upon us in the day-time, and that seek to turn us from our course. In writing of these wraiths, I use the plural deliberately; for, like the

demons of Gadara, their name is Legion. You have only to read the varying descriptions of the strange phenomenon, as seen in different ages and in different climes, in order to be driven to the conclusion that of Noonday Ghosts there are a multitude. Indeed, I have collected some first-hand evidence myself, and I shall set down here some ghost-stories that I can vouch for as being absolutely authentic.

III

To my certain knowledge, Cyril Weare has seen the Noonday Ghost. Cyril's unceasing regret is that, in his case, life was well advanced before he was brought under its best influences. He called last night just as I was leaving to attend a social evening in connection with our Young People's Study Circle.

'I'm sorry,' he said, 'for I specially wanted to talk one or two things over with you!'

'Well, my dear fellow,' I replied, 'come with me! I merely desire to be present and to show a little interest in the young people. I shall have the whole evening on my hands, and you and I will be able to chat away to our hearts' content!'

He came; but it was evident that the experience was not an enjoyable one. The young folk were having all sorts of fun, but he made no effort to share it. After an hour's pleasant conversation he prepared to leave.

'Life might have been such a different proposi-

tion for me,' he said, as we shook hands, 'if my young days had been spent in such an atmosphere. It's easy for these young people to live well and do well.'

I have often tried to reason Cyril into a happier mind. His sun is still high in the heavens. His powers are at their prime. He has the capacity for great achievement; but he has seen the Noonday Ghost. It takes the form of a conviction that it is too late now for any lofty enterprise. He is full of remorse that he did not take himself more seriously twenty years ago. He reflects morbidly on the golden opportunities that once visited him, and that he allowed to slip through his fingers. If only the shadow on the dial would move for him, as it moved for Hezekiah, ten degrees backward, he would make something of life. But now—there stands the Noonday Ghost! He fancies that it is too late to begin. Only those who have seen this horrid spectre know how it freezes the blood and paralyses all the powers.

In trying to help Cyril to scare this horrid thing away, I have often reminded him that a man of his years is younger now than used to be the case. I do not know why; but, in spite of all the wear and tear, the rush and bustle, of modern conditions, a man is much less exhausted at fifty nowadays than were his great-great-grandfathers at the same time of life. Shakespeare, writing three hundred years ago, uses language concerning people of forty that

we should only regard as appropriate in reference to much older men.

> When forty winters shall besiege thy brow
> And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,
> Thy youth's proud livery so gazed on now
> Will be a tattered weed of small worth held.

'I wax now somewhat ancient,' wrote Bacon to Burleigh, in his thirty-second year; 'one and thirty years is a great deal of sand in the hourglass!' I quoted Shakespeare. Cowley was born at about the time of Shakespeare's death, and represents, therefore, a new generation, but he employs pretty much the same phraseology in defining the period of life at which a man begins to grow old. 'There is no fooling with life,' he says, 'when it is once turned beyond forty.' The *seventeenth* century regarded life beyond forty as the mere running-out of the sands; the *eighteenth* century thought of the years that immediately followed the fortieth as the autumn of life; the *nineteenth* century esteemed a man of forty as in the plenitude of his power and on the threshold of his usefulness; to the *twentieth* century a man of forty is a boy! Men are entitled to all the rights and privileges appertaining to the period in which they have the good fortune to be born. Cyril should make the most of his.

Whenever I recall Cyril's haunted eyes I think of the story that the *Autocrat of the Breakfast Table* tells concerning the young farmer who was urged by a friend to plant some apple trees.

'No,' he replied, 'apple trees are too long growing; I can see no sense in planting trees for other people's enjoyment.'

The young farmer's father was spoken to about it; but he, with better reason, alleged that apple trees were slow and life was fleeting. At last someone mentioned it to the aged grandfather of the young farmer. He had nothing else to do; so he hobbled off and planted a number of trees. And he lived long enough to drink barrels of cider made from the apples that grew on them! The old man was the only one of the trio who had seen no sign of the Noonday Ghost.

IV

Then there's Ned Andrews. In Ned's case the spectre takes a very, very different form. Ned has great gifts, and he means to use them. But he is infatuated by the notion that there is plenty of time. He is always dreaming of the work that he is *going* to do. He is always planning and preparing, and equipping himself more perfectly for the undertaking! But he never does anything! It is a mistake, of course, to begin until you are ready; but I am sure that Ned Andrews would develop his powers much more rapidly by using them than by indulging in an infinite variety of preliminary flourishes. His anxiety to excel is admirable; the modesty that makes him feel so keenly his present inefficiency is beautiful; but a man may be ruined by his

virtues as well as by his vices. It is absurd to say that you will never enter the water until you have learned to swim. If one never settles down to his task until he feels able to execute it perfectly, the work will never be done. Ned's Noonday Ghost is scaring him out of his priceless opportunity. Let him take off his coat and get to work, and the horrible thing will vanish!

V

But by far the most distressing of all the authentic stories known to me of the appearance of this frightful apparition is the story of Harry Rodwell. The Noonday Ghost has scared Harold into a life of downright materialism. Since I first interested myself in Harold's case I have discovered that it is by no means an isolated one. The tendency is fairly common. It arises partly from that fine and superior contempt with which middle-age loves to treat the extravagances and enthusiasms of youth, and partly from the fear of age and the pressing necessity of providing against it. The man who sees this Noonday Ghost drops, in his sudden terror, all the fond fancies of his earlier days and devotes himself without reserve to money-making and practical concerns. It was the discovery of this sordid and perilous propensity that led Schiller to argue that we become less spiritual in the central span of life. The animal nature, he maintains, dominates the more generous qualities; and the least excellent ingre-

dients of our humanity prevail. Newman held nearly the same view. In early life, he points out, a man finds it easy to be unselfish, and will, under the spell of some vehement enchantment, fling the world away and count that world well lost. 'But in middle life,' he says, 'material interests inevitably submerge a man's whole nature into selfish indifference towards all with which self is not concerned unless those interests are subdued by high religious and moral principle.'

Shades of the prison-house begin to close upon the *growing boy.*
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;
The *youth,* who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's priest
And by the vision splendid
Is in his way attended;
At length the *man* perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

Of all the Noonday Ghosts, this, then, is the most dangerous. Youth is romantic; Middle-age is prosaic. Youth is impulsive; Middle-age is cautious. Youth is capable of passionate enthusiasms, and counts the cost too little; Middle-age is less easily swept off its feet, and counts the cost too long. Youth is reckless; Middle-age is calculating. And so the position is full of peril. I used to think that Christ's solemn words about gaining the whole world and losing one's own soul were addressed especially to youth. But I was mistaken. Youth may lose its soul thoughtlessly, wildly, gallantly;

but Middle-age will do it deliberately and with its eyes wide open. Youth is all soul; Middle-age forgets that such a thing exists. To middle-life the world seems everything, and success is cheaply gained if nothing more than the soul is sacrificed.

As soon as this screed of mine is printed, I must post a copy to John Broadbanks. It will remind him of that dark night on which we drove home together from Diamond Creek. And it will remind him of something immensely more important. It will remind him that he and I are in the danger zone. We are on the haunted territory. The Noonday Ghost may startle us into dropping life's choicest treasure. The man to whom this dread spectre appears at noonday must grip with a desperate clutch those precious things that he once prized so highly, but which he is now so sorely tempted to let fall.

## VIII

## NEW YEAR'S DAY

It is New Year's Day! Last night—a typical Australian midsummer's night, balmy and starlit—we all went out to the Watchnight Service; and, on our way home, we heard the bells pealing out their wild and joyous welcome to the year that has just arrived. I thought of Charles Lamb. The gentle Elia thought that the bells were 'the music nighest bordering on Heaven.' And, of all sounds of all bells, he thought none so solemn and touching as the peal which rings out the Old Year, 'I never hear it,' he says, 'without a gathering-up of my mind to a concentration of all the images that have been diffused over the past twelvemonth; all I have done or suffered, performed or neglected, in that regretted time. I begin to know its worth, as when a person dies. It takes a personal color.' We have all extended the hospitality of our hearts to just such thoughts and feelings. Logically, it is, of course, quite unreasonable; perhaps even a trifle absurd. There is no more ground for reviewing the past and foreshadowing the future on the first of January than there is on any other day in the year. The sun goes down on December the thirty-first just as it

goes down on other nights; the dawn creeps up on the first of January just as it does on other mornings. The beginning of the year is not one of Nature's festivals. The fixing of a certain date as the beginning of the year is purely arbitrary; it is like declaring a certain point to be the beginning of a circle. Logic laughs at us. But who cares?

Man is not logical; never was and never will be. Logic is his slave, not his lord. He uses it just as far as it suits him. His sentiment is invariably more commanding than his reason. Years ago I knew a brilliant young barrister, Archibald Needham, the pride and ornament of his profession. His face was handsome and finely chiselled, but cold as marble. You could never tell, unless he wished you to do so, whether he was pleased or disappointed, gratified or grieved. He dressed immaculately; and, in his office, sternly insisted upon the most faultlessly regular professional habits. He plumed himself on his perfect precision. His methods by thought and action were all of them dominated by an intellect that was as inflexible as a proposition in Euclid and as rigid as steel. Yet when, in the evening, he reached his beautiful suburban home, and closed the door behind him, he would take his baby boy from the arms of his charming young wife, bound off with him into the dining-room, drop into the great arm-chair beside the fire, and chatter away to the baby for five minutes without a break. Archie knew perfectly well, of course, that the child could not

understand a word he said. But, even in him, sentiment was superior to reason and came to its own in the end. And, illogically but inevitably, we all liked him the better for it. A Scottish writer says that Man is neither logical nor illogical; he is analogical; 'his mind sweeps forward, not in the rigid iron line of the railway excavation, but with the curves of a river that follows the solicitation of the ground.' That may be so. But, whether Man be illogical or analogical or supralogical, I only know that he is not logical. Because Archie Needham is not as logical as he thinks he is, he sits there talking to the baby; because Charles Lamb is not logical, he feels a surge of uncontrollable emotion as he listens to the music of the bells; and, because I am myself less logical than I sometimes fancy, I am writing this screed of mine on New Year's morning. We may assent to the conclusions of the logicians; we may feel as certain as they are that the days of the year make up a cycle and that none of them is first and none last; but sentiment is too strong for us; it persists in clinging fondly to the day that it sets aside as the first day and to the day that it sets aside as the last day; and, as long as the world lasts, New Year's Day will, in consequence, be invested with a character peculiarly its own.

For, after all, logic is not the only law. In our attachment to New Year's Day we are guided by a sure instinct. We are wiser than we know. It is essential that we should each enjoy seasons of over-

haul and review. Each individual life is a sublime experiment. Each personality on the planet is a novelty; it is absolutely unique; nothing like it has ever appeared before. Life's highest attainment lies in making the best of ourselves. But it is not easy. Each man is like a pioneer fighting his way through an unexplored continent. Nobody else has ever had *his* life to live: and nobody else's experience can, therefore, serve as a guide-book for his own journey. It is all very well to write books on *Life and How to Live It;* such a volume is useless to me; and the reasons that make it useless to me make it useless, also, to everybody else. I want a book on *My Own Life and How to Live It.* It must begin with my own birth, and it must end with my own death, and it must have my own photograph as its frontispiece. And, because nobody on earth is able to write it, and nobody, save myself, would wish to read it, such a volume has never been published, and never will be. There is no *Handbook for Tourists* on the greatest journey of all. Like the explorer, I must find my way as I go along. This being so, it follows that it will be of immense value to me to stand occasionally on some lofty eminence from the heights of which I can survey the country that I have already traversed and map out for myself a path through the unknown territory that lies still before me. It may be that I shall decide to retrace my steps to some extent in order to avoid insuperable obstacles that, from this hill-top, I can descry;

or it may be that I shall see the wisdom of deviating slightly from the direction which, heretofore, I have so steadily pursued. Many of our steps, and especially our earlier steps, are taken at haphazard. We are working in the dark. We drift into occupations, and we settle in localities, on the spur of a passing whim or at the dictate of the merest chance. We follow the line of the least resistance and are astonished at finding ourselves *where* we are and *what* we are. In the nature of things, many of these fitful and fugitive movements must be more or less mistaken. We have stumbled into a path that is, if no worse, only second-best. It is just as well that, at certain times, we should have the opportunity of looking back and looking forward and looking round. Even though we see no reason for retracing our steps or changing our course, we resume our journey with the greater confidence and satisfaction. We have at least taken our bearings, seen life steadily and seen it whole.

Moreover, it is essential that I should have stated times at which I can take myself to pieces and sort myself out. In each of our skins there is a *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*—together with a lot more people. A recent writer has said that the trouble with Mr. Bernard Shaw is that there are two Bernard Shaws, and that they do not get on very well with one another. Bernard Shaw, the mystic, chants solemn hymns in praise of the Life-Force, and calls all mankind to worship in her temple. But when

the worshippers enter the temple they find Bernard Shaw, the realist, delivering a lecture on the shortcomings of the goddess, who is really the Mother of Humbug, and who is responsible for the romantic glamor he hates so much. 'One might,' this writer goes on to say, 'develop this idea in an imaginary dialogue between the saintly Bernard and the cynical Shaw. Bernard is a kind of Jacob Boehme; his brother Shaw is a kind of Tom Paine; and they are everlastingly bickering. It is not the fact that he is both a mystic and a realist, but the fact that in him the mystic and the realist are never reconciled, that keeps Mr. Shaw from the station he aspires to among the great teachers of humanity.' Assuming that Mr. Shaw's critic has accurately summarized the situation, he has only proved that Mr. Shaw is in the same dilemma as the rest of us. Each of us, I said just now, finds within his skin *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*—together with a lot more people.

For every man is a mob. Those who, like Mr. Bernard Shaw and Stevenson's famous hero, have only two personalities to deal with, are to be congratulated on the simplicity of their problem. Human existence involves a network of intricacies. During the first half of life, men's interests tend to broaden and multiply; during the second half, they tend to become fewer and to contract. The difficulty, during both processes, is to keep things in their proper places. Take the case of Stephen Graham.

Stephen is a member and an office-bearer of the Clittingham Church; he is therefore distinctly a *religious* man. He is the proprietor of the Clittingham Hill Iron Foundry; he is therefore a prominent *commercial* man. In his stately home at High Peak you may find him of an evening happily surrounded by his wife and bairns; Stephen is essentially a *family* man. He recognizes his duty in relation to public affairs, is an esteemed and honored citizen, and has twice been Mayor of Clittingham. He is very keen on golf, and is, therefore, a *sportsman.* He is the Vice-President of the Shakespearean Society and likes to be thought a *literary* man. And there are minor interests arising from his love of roses, his social qualities, and the like. Anybody can see at a glance that, within the skin of Stephen Graham, there are not only two Stephen Grahams but a crowd. To live so many-sided a life—and most lives are many-sided—requires skilful management. Each of these Stephen Grahams grows a little or dwindles a little every year; and those that grow grow at the expense of those that dwindle. Unless, therefore, this growing and dwindling be watched and, if needs be, checked, any one of these Stephen Grahams may grow so great, and the others so small, that the one will absorb and obliterate all the rest. Some fine morning one of these Stephen Grahams will find himself so gigantic, and the others so dwarfish, that he will put them all in his pocket and walk off with them. We

shall look for the religious Stephen Graham and the domestic Stephen Graham and the literary Stephen Graham and the sporting Stephen Graham, but we shall not find them; we shall see only the huge form of the commercial Stephen Graham striding away in the distance and we shall have to guess the rest. Or it may be that the commercial Stephen Graham will sink to insignificance because some other Stephen Graham has captured a dominating place. Such things do happen. And the beauty of New Year's Day is that it gives Stephen Graham the opportunity of comparing each of his numerous Stephen Grahams with all the other Stephen Grahams; of marking the extent to which each has grown or dwindled during the year; and of taking the necessary steps to secure that each Stephen Graham shall be of proper size and occupy his proper place. The girders must not be allowed to crush the life out of life's gentler and lovelier things. Stocktaking is a very important process. It is good for me once a year to turn my personality over; to sort it out; and to see exactly how I stand.

It is, however, one thing to take our bearings and another thing to shape our destinies. The degree to which we actually profit by the wisdom gained in our annual review depends, in many cases, on the stage of life that we have reached. As the years roll on, we feel an increasing repugnance to change. We like to follow the familiar road, to go on in the same old way. Life does not, however,

start on that principle. Childhood revels in change; and, in youth, variety is still charming. A young man will change his profession with a lighter heart than that with which an old man will move into the next street. It is for this reason that the good resolutions of youth—the resolutions that generally spring into being with the arrival of the New Year—are so often stillborn. They come to nothing. They are made too easily. Things that are made easily are made plentifully, and are, as a rule, of small value. In youth we resolve airily. We will, we promise ourselves, make our mistakes no more. We will realize all our ideals. The virtues shall spring up in our lives like mushrooms on a misty morning; the vices shall vanish as though a cloud of locusts had devoured them in a night. As a programme, this is perfect; but the trouble is that it never gets any further. And it never gets any further for the simple reason that it is so shockingly overloaded. We do protest too much. Was it not Thomas à Kempis who said that if every man would set to work to cultivate one new virtue, or weed out one old vice, each year, he would be a saint in no time? But youth is impatient; it cannot wait for seeds to grow; it must transform everything and transform it immediately. The programme is preposterous; and, as a consequence, it collapses of its own weight.

But, if youth is too ready for change, maturity is too reluctant. Many a man, in reviewing life at

the end of the year, sees changes that really ought to be made, but he persuades himself that it is too late to make them. Old dogs, he says, cannot learn new tricks. But can't they? Longfellow lived in the plastic and formative period of American history. He was impressed by the fact that great numbers of men, in contemplating the erection of the fabric of the nation's greatness, saw things that ought to be made, but pleaded that it was too late in life for them to undertake the work. And, in stinging rebuke, he wrote:

It is too late! Ah, nothing is too late
Till the tired heart shall cease to palpitate.
Cato learned Greek at eighty; Sophocles
Wrote his grand Œdipus, and Simonides
Bore off the prize of verse from his compeers,
When each had numbered more than four-score years;
And Theophrastus at four-score and ten
Had but begun his 'Characters of Men.'
Chaucer at Woodstock, with the nightingales,
At sixty wrote the 'Canterbury Tales.'
Goethe at Weimar, toiling to the last,
Completed 'Faust' when eighty years were past.

Wherefore, let the young man make his New Year resolution—one and no more—and let him make it fearfully!

And let the old man make his New Year resolution—one at least—and let him make it fearlessly!

And, as surely as New Year's Morning follows Old Year's Night, each shall find there is grace enough in Heaven to transmute his January dream into a June reality.

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